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The Canterbury  
Poets



CHAUCER

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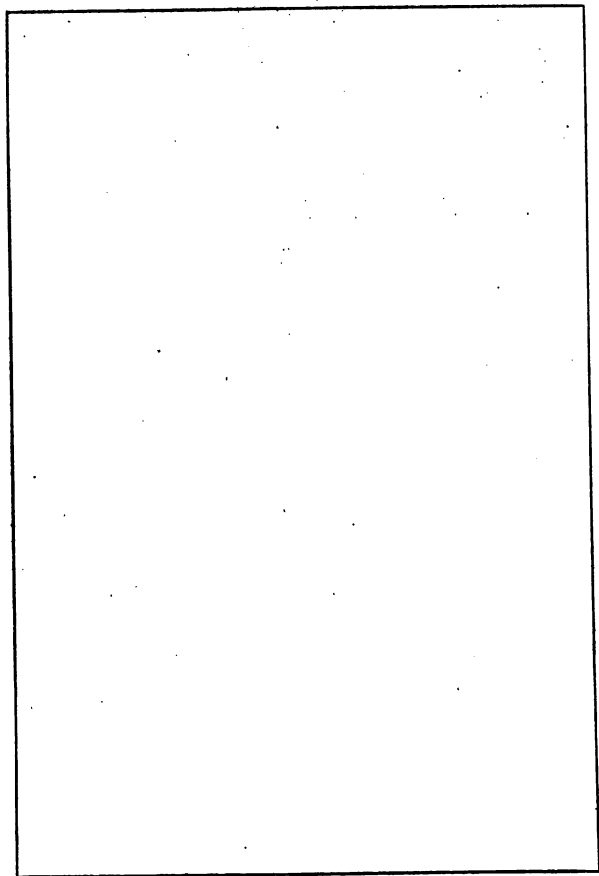


0 The Canterbury Poets.

EDITED BY WILLIAM SHARP.

CHAUCER





*Geology*

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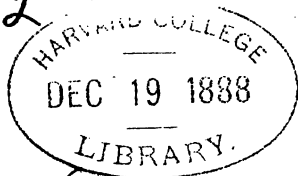
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*See in journal.*

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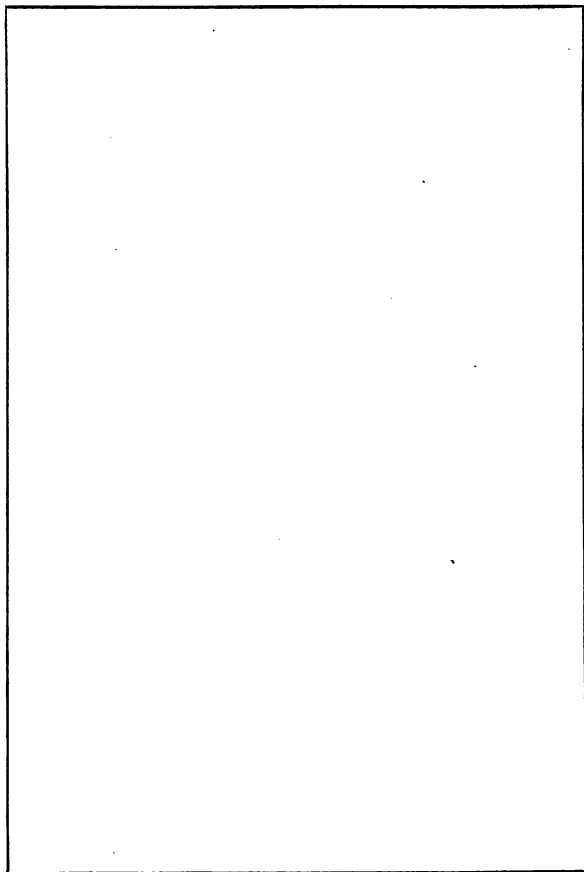
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## NOTE.

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THERE are one or two peculiarities of orthography and grammar which, by their frequent recurrence, have largely contributed to the popular belief that Chaucer is unintelligible to modern readers. The idea is a most mistaken one, and may be to some extent dispelled through the elucidation of a few of the most prevalent difficulties. The termination —*eth* signifies the imperative mood, and is rarely used by Chaucer in any other sense. The prefix *y-* denotes the past participle, which is also sometimes indicated by the prefix *to-*, implying thoroughness; as *to-hewn*, *to-torn*. The letter Y is constantly used for G, as in *yeve* for give, *yate* for gate, *ayen* for again. The word *one* is often represented by the single letter o; and *heighte* stands, of course, for called.

It is not pretended that the glossary includes every word that differs from the modern synonym, but only such as an educated reader might find difficulty in understanding.



## INTRODUCTION.

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THE year 1888 seems a peculiarly fitting time for the preparation of a Chaucerian volume for the Canterbury Poets Series. For it was in the spring of 1388, on the 28th of April, just half a thousand years ago, that the merry company of thirty-one set out from the Tabard Inn at Southwark upon what surely was the blithest pilgrimage on record. The war-worn Knight and love-lorn broidered Squire, the mincing Prioress and buxom Wife of Bath, the "dronken Miller," the Monk with jingling bridle, and the score and more of others, with nothing in common but their destination and their hope to make the time pass well—their pilgrimage is never done. They are still upon the road, wrangling and clattering and laughing down the centuries, as



living as they were five hundred years ago. For among them rode one who does not seem to have at first attracted the attention of the Master of Ceremonies, but whom he at last called upon for a tale.

“ ‘ What man art thou ? ’ quod he.  
Thou lookest as thou woldest find a hare,  
For ever on the ground I see thee stare.  
Approche nere and loke up merily.  
Now ware you, sires, and let this man have place.  
He in the waste is shapen as wel as I.  
This were a popet in an arme to embrace  
For any woman. Smal and fair of face—  
He semeth elvish by his countenance ;  
For unto no wight doth he daliance.’ ”

This was Chaucer, the first English humorist; and the instinct of the true artist, who works to please himself, comes quaintly out in his deliberately boring his company into revolt with a parody of the ancient chivalrous romance.

We must all desire to believe that Chaucer actually did perform the storied pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas, and that some, at least, of the characters in the prologue were sketched from his companions. Each figure is instinct with an individualism and vitality such as none before Chaucer, and not everyone since, has been able to impart. It is perhaps the most characteristic

feature of his work, this direct perception at once of a character's dramatic significance and of his own artistic purpose in regard to it. There is about his fiction a subtle air of realism worked out even by little masterly defects; as where he says of the two clerks in the "Miller's Tale"—

"John highte that one, and Ailen heighte that other.  
Of one town were they born, that heighte Strother  
Fer in the North, *I can not tellen where.*"

None of his predecessors would have dreamed of providing a natural hiatus as an additional sanction of the evidence. Up to his time the "makers" had been scarcely worthy of that cumbrous name; for the thing to be told was all they cared about, and the manner of the telling was apparently ordained rather by convention than by genuine appreciation of the powers of form. They had good things and beautiful to tell, minds full of truth and quaintest fancy, and hearts with a warmth of aspiration and devotion such as occasionally hurried them to almost poetic altitudes. But times were against them. The circulation of their poems was a process even slower than the writing down thereof. These were at best severely simple—not to say serious—and grace and humour had to wait a lighter mood. Lowell's essay upon Chaucer (in *My Study Windows*) should be read

by everyone. It is full of the most happy comments, among which is none more apposite than his remark that the early English writers seemed "to conceive of speech rather as a tool than as a musical instrument."

And, curiously enough, Chaucer himself, in a short essay upon style, pronounced by one of his characters in "*Troilus and Creseide*," likens language to a harp. The whole passage is instructive, as showing that Chaucer appreciated the difference between the method of the master and the haphazard of the amateur.

In reality he was the first English writer who respected his art as an art; and brought it to something like fulfilment, not by granting it a sterile freedom from control, but by mating it with tolerably manageable matter. He converted a dialect into a language; and grafted thereon a literature of distinctive character and independent future. He set up the new target; and drove one shaft after another straight to the centre of the bull, leaving his successors to beat that if they could. His work is the work of a master; and its vividness even now remains in some departments unexcelled. Thackeray himself never sketched figures more living than are those pilgrims of five hundred years ago. Fielding can show nothing to rival Chaucer's treatment of

the lighter themes ; nor can his Homeric battle even compare in exquisite humour with the clamour of the barnyard bereft of its lord. That "cok Chaunteclere" is sublime ; and "his faire Partelote" is delicious. Not a word in the tale is out of place ; and it is probable that readers, on a first interview with Chaucer, will be surprised to find how consistent and intelligible is his language.

It is true, of course, that before his time the English tongue had already undergone the first process of development, and that his predecessors had laid down the rude warp of a literature. But the woof was begun by the author of the "Canterbury Tales," who also enriched the language by copious importation of most needful, if foreign, matter from the Norman vocabulary.

There is something ludicrous in charging Chaucer, as is often done, with having corrupted the English tongue. The "corrupt" element had been introduced long before his birth ; and the language, as a subtle vehicle of thought, benefited thereby so obviously that apologetics in the matter would be out of place. It may, however, be pointed out that Chaucer confirmed the foreign words in their tenure mainly by the demonstration of their value in precise significance.

One finds, here and there in Chaucer's works,

little dandified indications that a knowledge of French was regarded as essential to that which novelists, even now, call *ton*; and it must be remembered that the indiscriminate infusion of French words had been the *vogue*, not only among the upper classes and the foreign missionaries, whose defective knowledge of Saxon excused them, but among the native priests and friars, whose language and manners became more or less affected by—one is half disposed to say “in consequence of”—the politic patronage of the throne. Thus in the *Ancreu Riwele*—written more than a hundred years before Chaucer’s birth, and in a dialect much less exposed to “Court influence” than was that which Chaucer took as the matrix of his works—we find a great proportion of the French vocabulary in irksome mechanical union with the vernacular. But amalgamation there was none till Chaucer came; and, even then, the language of the Court was French—“French of Paris,” if possible.

But in the country at large, the English tongue and the English spirit became the rallying points of a new resistance to the later immigrants from France. In 1362 (when Chaucer was twenty-two years old) the Courts of Law were ordered to conduct their proceedings in the native language; and in the succeeding year the principle for the first

time took effect in the royal speech on the opening of Parliament.

Not till a hundred years later was Caxton to print the "Canterbury Tales," and give a fresh impulse to the development of our country. But the reign of Edward III. saw the first successful movement towards the popularising of education and intelligence. Scholarship, and even culture, had begun to percolate into the lower strata ; and signatures instead of crosses were affixed to documents. Penmanship and the power of reading became less rare ; and, as facility in those accomplishments increased, the greatest trammel of an author's fancy and the greatest obstacle to his popularity dwindled in unison.

Those classes, moreover, whose training fitted and disposed them to take an interest in books, were in a state of inordinate and childish gaiety, at once the natural sequel of protracted military glory and the foster-mother of artistic productivity. During war, and while political matters engross the public mind, art is ignored and withdraws itself. But when the nation is in a flippant and prodigal mood, he who can make songs and pretty things is at a premium. And if ever there was a time when pretty things were prized supremely, Chaucer lived in it. It cannot be said that the national taste was of the most refined order ; for, indeed, an unclean

and uneasy gorgeousness seems to have been the highest aspiration of all classes. Luxury was a word of which the country had only newly been made free; and it was not as yet quite understood. People wore their glories upside-down; and all the ancient ceremonies of chivalry degenerated into ceremonial cloyed with a clumsy and childish extravagance.

Yet chivalry was not by any means dead. Purity was still regarded as a highly desirable, if not the least dispensable, quality in woman; and the appreciation of its value among men was possibly deriving new weight from the manifestation of its rarity. The pantomime, if not the reality, of deference to womanhood was still retained, as was also the ostentation of devoutness and self-sacrifice. But, as the Pardoner says, "*Radix malorum est cupiditas*," and the desire of getting was rampant in all classes, in the country as in the towns. The old hospitality had been sapped by extravagance in dress. Charity had suffered from the same cause, and had paled of its graciousness at the tone of demand that had crept into the petitions of the "vileins." For, side by side with all this trumpery and puerile magnificence of the classes, there existed, in the lower grades, conditions of the utmost gravity and wretchedness. In 1348-9, 1361-2, 1369, and 1375-6—four times during

Chaucer's life—was England visited by pestilence, till more than half its population had been swept away. And when one thinks of the horrors that were thus kept vivid in the minds of the people, and remembers further how all the country was at this time stirred by a strange upheaval of superstition and the first murmurs of revolt, one is amazed at the fantastic merry-making that engaged the attention of the upper classes. Even then, the cry for protection against the resident foreign traders, who had been foolishly granted a practical monopoly of certain industries, was beginning to be heard in the towns; and the air was full of complaints regarding the various orders of the clergy, who, on their side, like the upper classes, took little pains to rebut or to discredit the accusations. The turbulence of the nobles compelled the king to conciliate the church as the best medium of communication with his people; and thus were ecclesiasticism and nobility brought into postures of antagonism.

And although Chaucer's patron, Lancaster, was for a time a supporter of Wyclif—who denied primarily the moral right of obedience to an immoral ruler—there can be no doubt that the personal feeling of the poet, as a gentleman, was on the side of his order. So we must not take too seriously his frequent sallies against monk and



friar. Whatever truth there may have been in the charges brought against those orders, Chaucer was no more likely than his neighbours were to go about crying "Ichabod," and making a spectacle of himself. The ponderous ceremonies of the time evidently amused him, and offended his artistic instinct ; but nothing is more apparent in his work than a reverent regard for that mysterious subetantive, *savoir faire*. His little scraps of foppery and his airy evasion of anything morbid, his keen satirical humour and his perfect willingness to remain on good terms with that which he has satirised—all contribute to his graceful charm.

It is impossible to insist too strongly on the fact that Chaucer was by instinct and upbringing a gentleman. The knowledge he displays in dealing with certain sciences might well astonish persons who have been accustomed to speak loosely of the ignorance of the middle ages ; and his intimacy with languages, with polity, and with the world is sufficiently evidenced by his poems and the delicate nature of the diplomatic duties with which he was from time to time entrusted. Ashmole speaks of him as Sir Geoffrey Chaucer ; and it is a thousand pities that we have no justification for attaching the title permanently to his name. Our modern ideas inevitably lead us to dissociate gentility from parentage like Chaucer's, and to

regard as menial such offices as he held about the Court. So the accolade might have been useful as a disinfectant of his name, and might have dispelled the haze of misapprehension evolved by his unfortunate functions. As a matter of fact, there was nothing positively base about his family ; but the very date of his birth is subject for conjecture.

The early biographers, subtracting an entirely hypothetical number of years from 1400, the authenticated date of his death, believed that he was born in 1328 ; but it is now generally recognised that the event should have been placed some twelve years later in history. The main facts for our consideration are that he wrote in the latter half of the fourteenth century, and received his education at a time when the conditions prevalent during that period were already largely in force. We have not space here to concern ourselves with his character or his literary manner ; and it is unnecessary to follow his surname through its several stages of evolution, or his immediate ancestors through the labyrinths of matrimonial complexity in which they were pleased to involve the line. That "John Chaucer, citizen and vintner of London," emerged therefrom with something like identity, and afterwards begot the poet, are facts endorsed by Geoffrey himself in a document by which, in middle life, he released his

right to his father's house. From other sources we know also that this John Chaucer was a man of substance ; and when we learn that in 1338 he accompanied the king and queen to Flanders, and appears to have held office, ten years later, as deputy king's butler in the ports of Southampton and London successively, the early introduction of his son to Court appears most consequent.

For Chaucer began life as a page in the household of Prince Lionel, second son of Edward III., and afterwards Duke of Clarence ; and it was in this capacity that the poet, in 1357, obtained the first extant documentary recognition of his existence. Whether he had been educated outside the palace, we cannot tell ; for the obsolete theory of his having attended one or both of the universities was based upon very ambiguous allusions, contained in poems no longer attributed to him. But boys of good family coveted the post of page in a great house, on account of the educational advantages it offered ; and we need look no further for proof that Chaucer's education was that of a gentleman. There used to be a refreshing tale told of his having been fined at the Inner Temple for thrashing a friar in Fleet Street ; but, as the Inner Temple did not till some years later become a nest of lawyers, we are constrained to rank this incident among the products of constructive art.

He bore arms in the expedition into France in 1359; and there are several reasons for supposing that he went, not in the "battle" of Prince Lionel, but in that of the king. In the first place, there is no record of his having subsequently received payment as a member of the prince's household; and, in the second place, we know that it was the king himself who, in March 1360, paid £16 for his ransom as a prisoner of war. Then, in '67, we next find him, under the designation of "*dilectus valletus noster*," accorded a pension from the king, and receiving the first payment of twenty marks. Moreover, Prince Lionel was engaged after '61 in the government of Ireland; and if Chaucer had followed him, we should surely have heard something more of the Irish in the "Canterbury Tales." The only direct reference that at the moment presents itself is one in a passage where he speaks of an Irishwoman as the mother of a very evil character; but that is no evidence of close personal acquaintance with the race.

There seems then good reason for believing that when Prince Lionel crossed St. George's Channel, Chaucer stayed in England, and fell among the pitfalls and quagmires of the gentle passion that are digged of womankind upon the borderlands of manhood. Most of his critics profess to discover

in his works a painful and recurring note of regret for a disappointed love which they believe to have come into existence during the unchronicled six years that succeeded 1360. And, indeed, there are passages that seem essentially the expression of personal feeling. One of the few poems whose dates we can accurately fix is "The Booke of the Duchesse," written on the death of the Duchess of Lancaster in 1369; and near the beginning of it we find Chaucer declaring himself unable to rest, because of—

"A sicknesse  
That I have suffred this eight yere,  
And yet my boot is never the nere.  
And there is physicien but one  
That may me heale—but that is done.  
Passe we over untill efte.  
That will note be mote nedes be lefta."

And, unless we go out of our way to fix upon this passage some connotation other than the natural one, we must come to the conclusion that in '61, when Chaucer had returned from camp to court, he fell in love as became a page and poet of twenty-one, but with an earnestness and constancy quite transcending the traditions of either class.

Be that as it may, he married, and continued to sing of some obdurate loved one—*possibly* his wife. That he was no longer a bachelor in '74, we know

from the fact that John of Gaunt then granted him an annual pension of £10 in consideration of good service rendered by him *and his wife Philippa* to "the said Duke, his consort, and his mother the queen." This implies that Philippa had been in attendance on the queen; and it would therefore seem most natural to suppose that a certain Philippa Chaucer, mentioned among the ladies of the chamber in '66, was the wife of the poet. It has been pointed out that she may, in '66, have been merely a cousin or namesake of the poet, and have married him subsequently; but Thomas Chaucer, afterwards Speaker, and now believed to have been Geoffrey's son, quartered with his own arms those of the Roet family, one of whom, called Philippa, was certainly at Court at this time. Her father, Sir Payne Roet, had come over with Queen Philippa in '28; and her sister, Katharine, the widow of Sir Hugh Swynford, was for some time mistress, and afterwards third wife, of John of Gaunt. So the hypothesis of Chaucer's marriage with Philippa Roet goes far to account for the otherwise remarkable degree of friendship between him and Lancaster.

And we know of nothing opposed to the theory of an early and not very successful marriage. It cannot be said that Chaucer, when he persistently spoke of himself as one who had read much of

love but knew none of its happiness, and when he constantly instilled into his reference to matrimony a tone of bitterness not evoked by any other subject, created a moral atmosphere likely to mellow that voice of which he complained as rousing him harshly from his pillow. Then again—

“ ‘ Weping and wailing, care and other sorowe  
I have enough on even and on morowe,  
Quod the marchant, ‘ and so have othermo  
That wedded been.’ ”

So the Merchant begins his prologue ; and when the Host presses him to give the company the benefit of his experience, he consents wearily—

“ ‘ Gladly,’ quod he ; ‘ but of min owen sore  
For sory herte I tellen may no more :’ ”

a reticence the more affecting for its singularity among the pilgrims ! It has been suggested that Lancaster's pension was granted, in '74, as a wedding gift ; but this theory is discredited by the fact that from '74 to '86, while Chaucer himself lived in the gate house at Aldgate, his wife was in attendance upon Constance, second Duchess of Lancaster. This does not look much like either honeymoon or harmony ; but we must not in any case lightly attach all the blame to the unfortunate Philippa. The traditions of her family were not

immaculate, 'tis true : but genius is proverbially difficult to live with ; and Chaucer certainly, in 1380, allowed himself to get mixed up in a very unpleasant case about the abduction of a young woman, who, however, acquitted him of responsibility.

There is, at the same time, no positive evidence that in '68, when he is described as a "yeoman of the king's chamber," he was even contemplating matrimony. But his improvident habits had evidently begun ; for in '69 we find him at the war in France, and borrowing £10 of a friend at home. In '76, while enjoying a double pension of forty marks (about £26 of ours), Gaunt's pension of £10 (£130 of ours), the proceeds of two comptroller-ships of customs in the Port of London, and the funds—£104 (equal to about £1300 of ours)—accruing to him as custodian of a certain Edmond Staplegate of Kent, we again find him borrowing £50 on account of the current half year's allowance. But it is undesirable that space should here be occupied by many such details. It will suffice to state that from '74 to '89 Chaucer's position was a secure one financially as well as socially.

And during that time he was repeatedly abroad upon diplomatic business, occasionally of a secret character, so well preserved as to confound the worthy emissary's biographers. His first official

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visit to Italy took place in the years '72 and '73; and there seems every possibility that the Italian spirit that afterwards directed his muse was inspired, not merely by experience of its actuating influences, but by personal intercourse with one of its greatest exponents. When Chaucer was at Padua, Petrarch lived at Arquà, only sixteen miles away; and it seems certain that the English poet would endeavour to meet the Italian master. The supposition that he succeeded in doing so is endorsed by at least one direct reference—where the Clerk of Oxenforde, in preluding the tale of patient Grisilde (in relation to which Petrarch was, about 1373, in correspondence with Boccaccio), tells how it had been—

“ Learned at Padua of a worthy clerk . . .  
Francis Petrarch, the laureate poet.”

It is conceivable that Chaucer may have heard Boccaccio deliver his first lecture at Florence on the 3rd of August 1373—may have even spoken with him, and have thus obtained an introduction to Petrarch. But this seems unlikely; for there is in all Chaucer's works no single mention of Boccaccio's name.

Those visits to Italy resulted, at all events, in a complete revolution in Chaucer's style. Instead of borrowing, as formerly, from the French

*trouvère*, he afterwards took all his methods and most of his material, though not his matter, from the Italian sources.

He was abroad again in 1376, twice in 1377, twice in 1378, and apparently once more in 1379; but it is not to our purpose to describe the various missions more specifically than by saying that their nature furnishes emphatic evidence of the respect and confidence in which he was held at Court. The second excursion in 1378, however, is interesting in the fact that Chaucer deputed John Gower to act during his absence as his attorney or deputy in the comptrollership of customs. It is tolerably certain that Gower and Chaucer were at one time intimate friends, but that the marked incompatibility of their natures produced a rupture. Chaucer, in his "Man of Lawe's Tale," says about Gower those things which he clearly ought not to have said; and Gower, in his 1393 edition, pointedly leaves unsaid those polite things which he had said of Chaucer in his earlier issue. It has been held that Chaucer was not the man to quarrel with an old friend; but intimacy with his works begets the conviction that he was eminently likely to let Gower quarrel with him, if the said sententious person were so disposed.

Chaucer's fortunes reached their height in 1385;

for in that year he held all his old offices and a second comptrollership assigned to him in 1382, and was further permitted to discharge the duties by permanent deputy. This last arrangement, of course, left him much more freedom for his work, of which a large proportion may therefore be ascribed to the eighties. But the chronology of his poems is a matter too abstruse to be dealt with here. Between 1386 and 1389 he must have had time pretty much at his own disposal; for in the end of the former year, and a few months after he had entered Parliament as a knight of the shire of Kent, he was suddenly deprived of both his comptrollerships, and "permitted" by royal license to surrender his two grants of twenty marks to a John Scalby. It is a fact full of unpleasant suggestion that this loss of office was synchronous with the sitting of a commission which the king had been forced in November to appoint, and which expressed dissatisfaction with the working of the customs offices. There is, however, no positive evidence that Chaucer was morally implicated in the scandals revealed; and most persons will prefer to attribute his fall to the disfavour that had overtaken his patron, Lancaster, at Court. For Gloucester had triumphed for a time; John of Gaunt had entered upon a three-years' banishment; and it is possible that the raid upon the customs

offices was merely the prototype of such spasmodic clean-sweeping as we find affected, and at times effected, by political new-brooms of the present day. John Scalby—whom it is, of course, the duty of everyone to detest—was probably the nominee of the new *régime*; and the better man, lacking backing, was degraded to a financial position no doubt stimulant of literary effort. His art lapsed, or was elevated to the level of an industry; and as the Duchess of Lancaster had no further need of Mistress Philippa Chaucer's services, that lady returned to her husband, apparently without producing any modification of his views on matrimony. She seems to have died in 1387; for there is no record of subsequent payment of her pension; and—possibly in consequence of this further docking of his funds—Chaucer in the succeeding year transferred or “converted” his pension, and went on pilgrimage to Canterbury.

There is evidence not to be blinked, that at this time poor Chaucer was in deep waters, and his funds in the inverse ratio of profundity; but in '89 the king reasserted his authority, and the return of Gaunt in November was precluded in July by the restoration of his favourite to all his various posts. He was further appointed Clerk of the King's Works at the Palace of Westminster, the Tower of London, the Castle of Berkhamstead,

and half a score of royal manors and lodges ; and was, in the succeeding year, employed in superintending sundry repairs at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and on the Thames embankment.

The dulness of such duties was, nathless, varied by sundry and diverse forms of excitation. March 1390 brought him an apparently insignificant but quite providential appointment as forester ; and on the 9th of September he was robbed at Westminster and at Hatcham—twice in one day—of property, amounting in all to £20, a horse, and other valuables. But even such vicissitudes apparently failed to invest his functions with interest. He, no doubt, desired to devote his time to literary work, and in January '91 he appointed a deputy, to whose mismanagement we must, of course, ascribe the dismissal that in the autumn overtook his chief.

And then came Chaucer's worst time of all. He was still an esquire ; he was still a forester ; and he still held Gaunt's pension of ten pounds. But improvidence seems to have been a characteristic constant in his cloudy, as in his sunny days ; and even after '94, when King Richard assigned him a life-pension of £20 a-year, he regularly obtained advances upon account. At last he sank so low, that in '98 the king granted him letters of protection, guarding him for two years from all suits but

those connected with land. And yet he went on borrowing. A second tun of wine to be received in the port of London from the king's chief butler—Thomas Chaucer,\* by-the-way—was granted him in October ; and one of the first acts of Henry IV., on his accession, twelve months later, was to assign the poet a pension of forty marks in addition to Richard's twenty pounds. Perhaps the most characteristic feature of this transaction is that Chaucer contrived, within a day or two, to lose the vouchers for these grants ; and so had to obtain new copies. And, relying in truly poet manner upon the new period of warmth, he took, on Christmas Eve, a fifty-three years' lease of a house in the garden of Lady Chapel, Westminster.

It is pleasant to think of him as spending here at least one summer in peace, and the performance of such work as pleased him. And in this house he died on the 25th of October 1400 ; and they laid him in the poet's corner of the Abbey, hard by.

It has been thought that a degree of religious excitement had resulted from or possibly *in* his taking up his quarters so near to the monks of a religious house ; and it is true that, late in life, he confesses, with ingenuous and unhappy

\* If this Thomas Chaucer was the poet's son, his tenure of the butlery would seem to argue a degree of maturity confirming the theory of his parent's early marriage.

juxtaposition of items, that he feels his powers going, and has taken to reading homilies and books of morality.

And, although the devotional side of Chaucer's character is not the first to present itself, one has only to read such passages as his description of the poor Parson, his definition of true "gentilnesse," or his account of Constance's patience under sorrow, to recognise that he was capable of the most earnest thought. And, in spite of most of his critics, who deprecate the idea that Chaucer, towards the close of his life, regretted some parts of his writings, a good many persons will probably feel that no man with such strong sensibility as permeates his work, or with so keen a diacritic instinct in regard to true humour and false, could possibly have failed to do so.

Chaucer is a sort of *enfant terrible*, whose worst sin is deficiency of reticence, which, in the form of candour, is at the same time his redemption. At his really terrible moments—which are few indeed—he is to much of modern popular literature what a rustic dung-hill is to the escapement of a Metropolitan sewer. A whiff of it offends, but does not infect; and the air all about is so bright and fresh and wholesome, so full of the song of birds, and so laden with the consciousness of countless flowers, that one passes the windward manure-heap

with resignation, and remembers it mainly by the contrast its artificiality presents to the sweetness of surrounding nature. And it must be borne in mind that Chaucer was a realist, and carries his own justification in his hand. If he is to be accepted at all as an exponent of mediæval manners, the conversational laxity of his time is sufficiently indicated by the fact that his male pilgrims, with women riding beside them, say things that would nowadays be resented by a party of moderately sober militiamen.

And, unfortunately, many of those nasty passages are examples of his very cleverest work ; and they are written with such naïveté that it goes to one's heart to leave them out. But that which is unfit to be spoken in an assemblage of cultured men and women is obviously unfit to be thrown broadcast among the readers of a popular edition. The age is one of realism, no doubt ; and there used to be some call for a protest against cant and artificial prudery. But the modern cant of candour is but a doubtful improvement. Ugliness is often to be found in Realism's retinue ; but he does not always ride in front as courier. The exposition of some of the strongest forces in life often warrants the bold handling of subjects not elevating in themselves ; and for the unregenerate human being, sound humour is apt to derive a special poignancy from



a so-called "spice of impropriety." But harping upon such manifestations of human instinct is quite insufficient, by itself, to save a writer from vapidness and fallacy. Truth is the resting point between two kinds of cant—between prudery and prurience ; and it may be doubted whether we are not, nowadays, in danger of escaping the deep sea by surrender to the devil. This tendency is in great part due to the anonymous nature of modern criticism, so often pronounced from behind a mask by some doubly unknown writer,—a disciple rather of the "good thing" than of the true. It was Chaucer himself who said :—

"For whan a man hath over-gret a wit,  
Full oft him happeth to misusen it."

It argues no nasty nicety to hold that dear old Chaucer wrote things that disappoint many persons who have no desire to dissociate the true from the good ; and, since it is impossible to find in so small a volume as this space for more than a fraction of our poet's work, it is best to give precedence to passages that are sure to awaken general pleasure, and a desire of greater intimacy.

Of such there, fortunately, is no lack in Chaucer ; and, though an enthusiastic appreciation of his wonderful charm has made the labour of selection one of infinite interest and pleasure, it has also

added a keener pain to the task of excluding many favourite passages, for which there was not room nor adequate proof of authenticity. The familiar "Romaunt of the Rose," for instance, the charming "Flower and the Leaf," "The Cuckow and the Nightingale," "The Court of Love," "The Complaint of the Black Knight," "Chaucer's Dream," and others, printed in some editions, are now generally acknowledged as spurious, and are therefore left out of court in the present volume.

The question of the genuineness of the first-named work has been argued on each side with much disabling of opponents' judgment. Skeat (in his "Prioress's Tale, etc.;" *Clarendon Press*) has shown, in regard to dialect, rhyme, and vocabulary, many scientific proofs of the poem's spuriousness; but it is doubtful whether anyone who had read much of Chaucer's undisputed works, and who suddenly dipped into the "Romaunt of the Rose," could fail to perceive, intuitively, and at once, the difference of workmanship. The mere fact that Chaucer, in his introduction to "The Legend of Good Women," explicitly acknowledges having translated the "Romaunt" is no proof that this extant translation is by him. The original poem obtained a degree of popularity certain to have enlisted the interest of more than one interpreter;

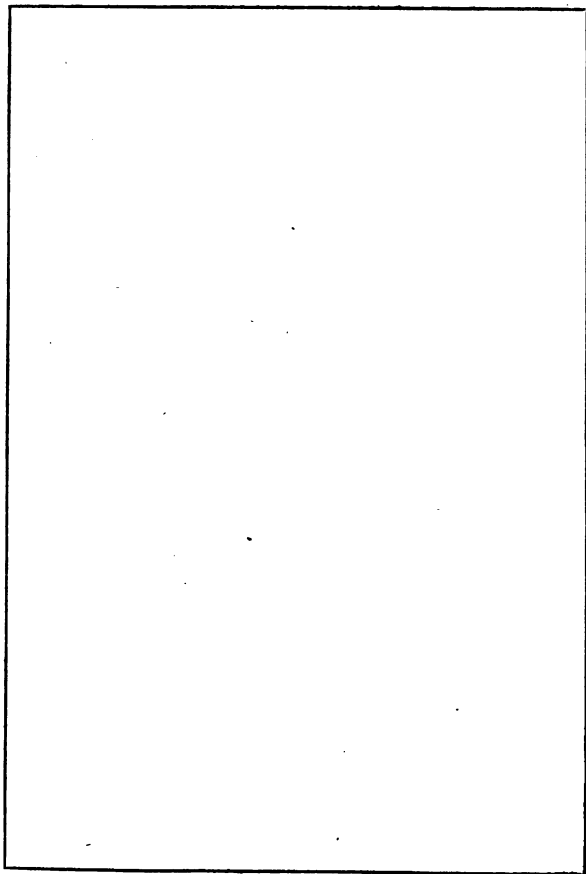
and it does not seem to have been as yet pointed out that, a little further on in the same prologue, the plea is put forward that "perauunter . . . him was boden make thilke tway of some person, and durst it not withsey." The "tway" refers to the "Romaunt" and the "Troylus," and, if they were actually made for a private library, the loss of one of them seems quite explicable.

But though those disputed poems find no place in this volume, it must not therefore be supposed that they are unreadable. No greater mistake could be made than to imagine that, when this volume has been explored, all has been read that is pre-eminently good in Chaucer. His works are an inexhaustible fund of graceful thought, of varied wisdom, of beautiful description ; and almost all are of a freshness perfectly inimitable. His love of birds, of sunshine, and of flowers, is a passion so genuine and obvious that one is amazed to find learned critics complacently regarding his much-loved marguerite as a rumpled rag of artificiality and convention culled from the *vade mecum* of the French *trouvère*. Does it appear to those Corydons of Paternoster Row impossible that any man should be spontaneously moved to extravagance of thought and happiness by spring-time with its birds and flowers? Did they never have furtive ecstasies of hope and the joy of life on the singing

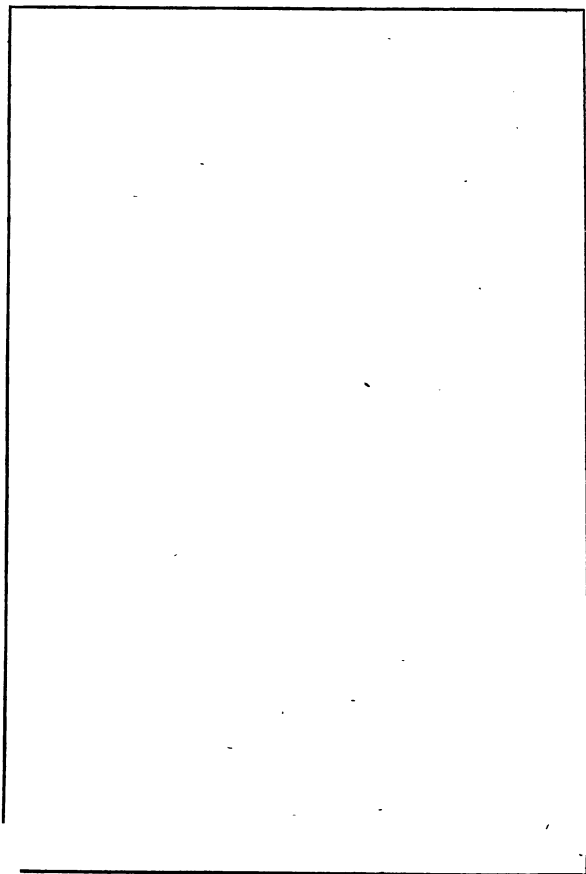
of the throstle or the stirring of the daisy myriads about their feet?

At all events, it is precisely because Chaucer feels those things truly, and awakens, when he sings of them, an echo in the experience of most human beings, that he has lived to sing the *trouwdre* down. And England will be a poorer and a darker place when Chaucer has drifted into the region of the unintelligible; for, as we read him, we experience continuously the mental sensation spoken of by Lowell, when he says:—"I repeat to myself a thousand times" the opening of the Prologue to the "Canterbury Tales;" "and still, at the thousandth time, a breath of uncontaminate spring-tide seems to lift the hair upon my forehead."

FREDERICK NOEL PATON.



CHAUCER.



## CHAUCER.

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### The Complaint of Pitie.

HOW PITIE IS DEAD AND BURIED IN A GENTLE HERTE.

---

PITIE that I have sought so yore agon  
With herte sore, and full of besie paine,  
That in this worlde was never wight so wo  
Without deathe, and if I shall not faine,  
My purpose was to Pitie to complaine  
Upon the cruelty and tyranny  
Of Love, that for my trowth doth me dye.

And that I by length of certaine yeares  
Had ever in one sought a time to speke,  
To Pitie ran I, all bespreint with teares,  
To prayen her on Cruelty me awreke ;  
But or I might with any word out breake,  
Or tell her any of my paines smerte,  
I found her dead and buried in an herte.

Adowne I fell, whan I saw the herse,  
Dead as a stone, while that swoone me last,  
But up I rose with colour full diverse,  
And pitously on her mine eyen I cast,  
And nearer the corse I gan preasen fast,  
And for the soule I shope me for to pray,  
I was but lorne, there was no more to say.



*THE COMPLAINT OF PITIE.*

Thus am I slaine, sith that Pitie is dead,  
Alas, the day that ever it should fall !  
What maner man dare now hold up his head ?  
To whom shall now any sorrowful herte call ?  
Now Cruelty hath cast to slee us all  
In idle hope, folke rechelesse of paine,  
Sith she is dead, to whom shall we complaine ?

But yet encreaseth me this wonder new,  
That no wight wote that she is dead but I,  
So many men as in her time her knew,  
And yet she deyde so suddainly,  
For I have sought her ever full busily,  
Sith I had first wit or mind,  
But she was dead, ere I could her find.

About her herse there stooden lustily  
Withouten any mo, as thoughte me,  
Bounty, perfutely well armed and richely,  
And fresh Beaute, Lust, and Jolite,  
Assured-manner, Youth, and Honeste,  
Wisedome, Estate, Drede, and Gouvernaunce,  
Confedred both by bond and alliaunce.

A complaint had I written in my honde,  
To have put to Pitie, as a bill,  
But I there all this company fonde,  
That rather would all my cause spill,  
Than do me helpe : I hold my plaint still  
For to those folke withouten faile,  
Without Pitie there may no bill avail.

Than leave all vertues, save only Pitie,  
Keping the corse, as ye have heard me saine,  
Confedred by honde until Crueltie,

And be assented whan I shall be slaine ;  
And I have put my complainte up againe,  
For to my foes my bill I dare not shewe  
The effect, which saith thus in wordes fewe.

“ Humblest of herte, highest of reverence,  
Benigne floure, croune of vertues all,  
Sheweth unto your royall excellence  
Your servaunt, if I durst me so call,  
His mortall harme in which he is yfall,  
And nought all only for his wofull fare,  
But for your renome, as he shall declare.

“ It standeth thus, that contraire Crueltie  
Allied is ayenst your regaltie  
Under colour of womanly beautie,  
(For men should not know her tyrannie)  
With Bountie, Gentillesse, and Courtesie,  
And hath deprived you of your place,  
That is hie beautie, appertenaunt to your grace.

“ For Kindly, by your heritage right  
Ye be annexed ever unto Bountie,  
And verely ye ought to doe your might  
To helpe Trough in his adversitie :  
Ye be also the croune of beautie,  
And certes, if ye want in these twaine  
The world is lorne, there is no more to saine.

“ Eke what availeth manner and gentillesse  
Without you, benigne creature ?  
Shall Crueltie be your governeresse ?  
Alas, what herte may it long endure ?

*THE COMPLAINT OF PITIE.*

Wherefore, but ye rather take cure  
To breake that perilous alliaunce,  
Ye sleen hem that been in your obeysaunce.

“ And further, if ye suffer this,  
Your renome is fordo in a throw,  
There shall no man wete what pitie is,  
Alas, that ever your renome is fall so low !  
Ye be also fro your heritage ythrow ;  
But Crueltie, that occupieth your place,  
And we dispaired that seeken your grace.

“ Have mercy on me, thou Herenus, queene,  
That you have sought so tenderly and sore ;  
Let some streame of light on me be seene,  
That love and drede you ever lenger the more ;  
For soothly to saine, I beare so sore,  
And though I be not conning for to plaine,  
For Goddes love have mercy on my paine !

“ My paine is this, that nought so I desire,  
That have I not, ne nothing like thereto  
And ever setteth Desire mine herte on fire,  
Eke on that other side where that I go,  
What maner thing that may encrease my wo,  
That have I ready unsought every where,  
Me lacketh but my death, and then my bere.

“ What nedeth to shew parcell of my paine ?  
Sith every wo, that herte may bethinke,  
I suffer, and yet I dare not to you plaine,  
For well I wote, though I wake or winke,  
Ye recke not whether I flete or sinke ;  
And nathelesse yet my trouth I shall susteine  
Unto my death, and that shall well be sene.

“ This is to saine, I will be yours ever,  
Though ye me slee by Crueltie your fo,  
Algate my spirit shall never discever  
Fro your service, fro any paine or wo.  
Sith ye be yet dead, alas, that it is so !  
Thus for your death I maye wepe and plaine  
With herte sore, and full of busie paine.”

EXPLICIT.

# The Booke of the Dutchesse;

OR, THE DEATH OF BLANCH.

---

I HAVE great wonder by this light,  
How I live, for day ne night  
I may not sleepe welnigh nought ;  
I have so many an idle thought,  
Purely for default of sleepe,  
That, by my trouth, I take no keepe  
Of nothing, how it commeth or gothe,  
To me n'is nothing lese nor lothe,  
All is yliche good to me,  
Joy or sorrow, where so it be :  
For I have feeling in nothing,  
But as it were a mased thing,  
All day in point to fall adoun,  
For sorrowfull imaginaicoun  
Is alway wholly in my minde.

And well ye wote, against kinde  
It were to liven in this wise,  
For nature would not suffise  
To none earthly creature,  
Not long time to endure  
Without sleepe, and be in sorrow :  
And I ne may, ne night ne morrow,  
Sleepe, and this melancolie  
And drede I have for to die,  
Defaut of sleepe and heavinesse,  
Hath slaine my spirit of quicknesse,  
That I have lost all lustyhead ;

Such fantasies ben in mine head,  
So I n'ot what is best to do :  
But men might aske me why so  
I may not sleepe, and what me is?

But nathelesse, who aske this,  
Leseth his asking truely,  
My selven cannot tell why  
The sooth, but truly as I gesse,  
I hold it be a sicknesse  
That I have suffred this eight yere,  
And yet my boot is never the nere :  
For there is phisicien but one,  
That may me heale, but that is done :  
Passe we over untill este,  
That will not be mote needs be leste ;  
Our first matter is good to keepe.

So whan I saw I might not sleepe,  
Now of late this other night  
Upon my bed I sate upright,  
And bade one reach me a booke,  
A romaunce, and he it me tooke  
To rede, and drive the night away :  
For me thought it better play,  
Than either at chesse or tables.

And in this booke were written fables,  
That clerkes had in old time,  
And other poets put in rime,  
To rede, and for to be in mind,  
While men loved the law of Kinde.  
This booke ne spake but of such things,  
Of queenes lives, and of kings,  
And many other things smale.  
Among all this I found a tale,  
That me thought a wonder thing. . . .

Whan I had red this tale wele,  
And overlooked it everydele,

Me thought wonder if it were so,  
For I had never heard speake or tho  
Of no gods, that coud make  
Men to sleepe, ne for to wake,  
For I ne knew never God but one,  
And in my game I said anone,  
And yet me list right evill to pley,  
Rather than that I should dey  
Through default of sleeping thus,  
I would give thilke Morpheus,  
Or that goddesse dame Juno,  
Or some wight els, I ne rought who,  
To make me slepe and have some rest,  
I will give him the alther best  
Yest, that ever he abode his live.  
And here onward, right now as blive. . . .

And to Juno,

That is his goddesse, I shall so do,  
I trowe that she shall hold her paid.

I had unneth that word ysaid,  
Right thus as I have told you,  
That suddainly I n'ist how,  
Such a lust anone me tooke  
To sleepe, that right upon my booke  
I fell a sleepe, and therewith even  
Me mette so inly such a sweven,  
So wonderfull, that never yet  
I trowe no man had the wit  
To conne well my sweven rede.

No, not Joseph without drede  
Of Egypt, he that rad so  
The kinges meting, Pharao,  
No more than could the least of us.

Ne nat scarcely Macrobeus,  
He that wrote all the avision  
That he mette of king Scipion,

The noble man, the Affrican,  
 Such mervailles fortun'd than,  
 I trow arede my dreames even,  
 Lo, thus it was, this was my sweven.  
 Me thought thus, that it was May,  
 And in the dawning there I lay,  
 Me mette thus in my bed all naked,  
 And looked forth for I was waked,  
 With smale foules a great hepe,  
 That had afraied me out of my slepe,  
 Through noise and sweetnesse of hir song,  
 And as me mette, they sat among  
 Upon my chamber roofe without  
 Upon the tyles over all about.  
 And everiche song in his wise  
 The most solemne servise  
 By note, that ever man I trow  
 Had heard, for some of hem sung low,  
 Some high, and all of one accord,  
 To tell shortly at o word,  
 Was never heard so sweet steven,  
 But it had be a thing of Heven,  
 So merry a sowne, so sweet entunes,  
 That certes for the towne of Tewnes  
 I n'olde but I had heard hem sing,  
 For all my chamber gan to ring,  
 Through singing of hir ermony,  
 For instrument nor melody  
 Was no where heard yet halfe so swete,  
 Nor of accord halfe so mete,  
 For there was none of hem that fained  
 To sing, for ech of hem him pained  
 To find out many crafty notes,  
 They ne spared nat hir throtes;  
 And, sooth to saine, my chamber was  
 Full well depainted, and with glas



Were all the windowes well yglased  
Full clere, and nat an hole ycrased,  
That to behold it was great joy,  
For holy all the story of Troy  
Was in the glaising ywrought thus,  
Of Hector, and of king Priamus,  
Of Achilles, and of king Laomedon,  
And eke of Medea and Jason,  
Of Paris, Heleine, and of Lavine,  
And all the wals with colours fine  
Were paint, both text and glose,  
And all the Romaunt of the Rose ;  
My windowes weren shit echone,  
And through the glasse the Sunne shone  
Upon my bed with bright bemes,  
With many glad glidy stremes,  
And eke the welkin was so faire,  
Blew, bright, clere was the aire,  
And full attempre, for sooth it was,  
For neyther too cold ne hote it n'as,  
Ne in all the welkin was no cloud.

And as I lay thus, wonder loud  
Me thought I heard a hunte blow  
T'assay his great horne, and for to know  
Whether it was clere, or horse of sowne.

And I heard going both up and downe  
Men, horse, hounds, and other thing,  
And all men speake of hunting,  
How they would slee the hart with strength,  
And how the hart had upon length,  
So much enbosed, I n'ot now what.

Anon right whan I heard that,  
How that they would on hunting gone,  
I was right glad, and up anone,  
Tooke my horse, and forth I went  
Out of my chamber, I never stent

Till I come to the field without,  
 There overtooke I a great rout  
 Of hunters and eke forresters,  
 And many relaies and limers,  
 And highed hem to the forrest fast,  
 And I with hem, so at the last  
 I asked one lad, a lymere,  
 "Say, fellow, who shall hunte here?"  
 (Quod I) and he answered ayen,  
 "Sir, the emperour Octavien"  
 (Quod he) "and is here fast by."  
 "A goddes halfe, in good time," (quod I)  
 Go we fast, and gan to ride;  
 Whan we come to the forrest side,  
 Every man did right soone,  
 As to hunting fell to done.

The maister hunte, anone, fote hote  
 With his horne blew three mote  
 At the uncoupling of his houndis,  
 Within a while the hart found is,  
 Yhallowed, and rechased fast  
 Long time, and so, at the last,  
 This hart rouzed and stale away  
 Fro all the hounds a previe way.

The hounds had overshot him all,  
 And were upon a default yfall,  
 Therewith the hunte wonder fast  
 Blew a forloyn at the last;  
 I was go walked fro my tree,  
 And as I went, there came by me  
 A whelp, that fawned me as I stood,  
 That had yfollowed, and coud no good,  
 It came and crept to me as low,  
 Right as it had me yknow,  
 Held downe his head, and joyned his eares,  
 And laid all smooth downe his heares.

I would have caught it anone,  
It fled and was fro me gone,  
As I him followed, and it forth went  
Downe by a floury grene it went  
Full thicke of grasse, full soft and sweet,  
With floures fele, faire under feet,  
And little used, it seemed thus,  
For both Flora and Zepherus,  
They two, that make floures grow,  
Had made hir dwelling there I trow,  
For it was on to behold,  
As though the earth envye wold  
To be gayer than the heven,  
To have mo floures such seven  
As in the welkin sterres be,  
It had forgot the poverté  
That winter, through his cold morrowes,  
Had made it suffer, and his sorrowes ;  
All was foryeten, and that was seene,  
For all the wood was woxen greene,  
Sweetnesse of dewe had made it waxe.

It is no need eke for to axe  
Where there were many greene greves,  
Or thicke of trees so full of leves,  
And every tree stood by himselve  
Fro other, well tenne foot or twelve,  
So great trees, so huge of strength,  
Of fortie or fiftie fadome length,  
Cleane without bowe or sticke,  
With croppes brode, and eke as thicke,  
They were not an inch asunder,  
That it was shadde over all under,  
And many an hart and many an hind  
Was both before me and behind,  
Of fawnes, sowers, buckes, does,  
Was full the wood, and many roes,

And many squirrels, that sete,  
 Full high upon the trees and ete,  
 And in hir manner made feasts :  
 Shortly, it was so full of beasts,  
 That though Argus, the noble countour,  
 Sate to reckon in his countour,  
 And reckon with his figures ten,  
 For by tho figures newe all ken  
 If they be craftie, reckon and nombre,  
 And tell of every thing the nombre,  
 Yet should he faile to reckon even  
 The wonders me met in my sweven :  
 But forth I romed right wonder fast  
 Downe the wood, so at the last  
 I was ware of a man in blacke,  
 That sate, and had yturned his backe  
 To an oke, an huge tree :  
 "Lord," thought I, "who may that bee ?  
 What eyleth him to sitten here ?"  
 Anon right I went nere,  
 Than found I sitte, even upright,  
 A wonder wel-faring knight,  
 By the manner me thought so,  
 Of good mokel, and right yonge thereto,  
 Of the age of foure and twentie yeere,  
 Upon his beard but little heere,  
 And he was clothed all in blacke.  
 I stalked even unto his backe,  
 And there I stood as still as ought,  
 The sooth to say, he saw me nought,  
 For why he hing his head adowne,  
 And with a deadly sorrowfull sowne,  
 He made of rime ten verses or twelve,  
 Of a complaint to himselfe, . . .  
 "I have of sorrow so great wone,  
 That joy get I never none,

Now that I see my lady bright,  
Which I have loved with all my might,  
Is fro me dead, and is agone,  
And thus in sorrow left me alone.  
Alas, Death, what cyleth thee,  
That thou n'oldest have taken me,  
Whan that thou tooke my lady swete?  
Of all goodnesse she had none mete,  
That was so faire, so fresh, so free,  
So good, that all men may well see." . . .

But at the last, to faine right sooth,  
He was ware of me, how I stood  
Before him and did off my hood,  
And had ygret him, as I best coud  
Debonairly, and nothing loud,  
He said, "I pray thee, be not wroth,  
I heard thee not, to saine the sooth,  
Ne I saw the not, sir, truly."

"Ah, good sir, no force," (quod I)  
"I am right sorry, if I have ought  
Distroubled you out of your thought,  
Foryeve me, if I have misse-take."

"Yes, thamends is light to make"  
(Quod he) "for there lithe none thereto,  
There is nothing mis-saide, nor do." . . .

[*The knight in black is induced to confide in Chaucer ;  
and, after declaring himself inconsolable, proceeds :—*]

I wretch that death hath made all naked  
Of all the blisse that ever was naked,  
Ywroth werste of all wights,  
That hate my dayes and my nights,  
My life, my lustes, be me loth,

For all fare and I be wroth,  
 The pure death is so full my fo,  
 That I would die, it will not so,  
 For whan I follow it, it will flie,  
 I would have him, it n'ill not me,  
 This is pain without reed,  
 Alway dying, and be not deed,  
 That Tesiphus, that lieth in Hell,  
 May not of more sorrow tell :  
 And who so wist all, by my trouth,  
 My sorrow, but he had routh  
 And pitie of my sorrows smart,  
 That man hath a fiendly herte :  
 For whoso seeth me first on morrow,  
 May saine he hath met with sorrow,  
 For I am sorrow, and sorrow is I,  
 Alas, and I will tell thee why,  
 My sorrow is tourned to plaining,  
 And all my laughter to weeping,  
 My glad thoughts to heavinesse,  
 In travaile is mine idlenesse,  
 And eke my rest, my wele is wo,  
 My good is harme, and evermo  
 In wrath is tourned my playing,  
 And my delite into sorrowing,  
 Mine heale is tourned into sicknesse,  
 In dred is all my sikernesse,  
 To derke is turned all my light,  
 My witte is foly, my day is night,  
 My love is hate, my slepe wakyng,  
 My mirth and meales is fastyng,  
 My countenaunce is nicete,  
 And all abawed, where so I be,  
 My peace pleding, and in werre  
 Alas, how might I fare were?

“ My boldnesse is turned to shame,

For false Fortune hath played a game  
At the chesse with me, alas the while. . . .  
With her false draughtes full divers  
She stale on me, and toke my fers,  
And whan I sawe my fers away,  
Alas, I couth no lenger play,  
But said, "Farewell sweet ywis,  
And farewell all that ever there is :"  
Therewith Fortune said, "Checke here,"  
And mate in the mid point of the checkere,  
With a paune errant, alas. . . .

"Sir," (quod he) "sith first I couth  
Have any manner wit fro youth,  
Or kindly understanding,  
To comprehend in any thing  
What Love was, in mine owne wit,  
Dredelesse I have ever yet  
Be tributarie, and yeve rent  
To Love holy, with good entent.  
And through pleasaunce become his thrall,  
With good will, body, herte, and all,  
All this I put in his servage,  
As to my lord, and did homage,  
And full devoutly I praide him tho,  
He should beset mine herte so,  
That it pleasaunce to him were,  
And worship to my lady dere.

"And this was long, and many a yere  
(Ere that mine herte was set o where)  
That I did thus, and n'ist why,  
I trowe it came me kindely,  
Paraunter I was thereto most able,  
As a white wall, or a table,  
For it is ready to catch and take  
All that men will therein make,  
Whether so men will portrey or paint,

Be the werkes never so quaint.

“ And thilke time I fared right so,  
I was able to have learned tho,  
And to have conde as well or better  
Paraunter either art or letter,  
But for love came first in my thought,  
Therefore I forgate it naught,  
I chees love to my first craft,  
Therefore it is with me laft,  
For why, I tooke it of so yong age,  
That malice had my courage ;  
Not that time turned to nothing,  
Through too mokell knowledging,  
For that time youth my maistresse  
Governed me in idlenesse,  
For it was in my first youth,  
And tho full little good I couth,  
For all my werkes were flitting  
That time, and all my thought varying,  
All were to me yliche good,  
That knew I tho, but thus it stood.

“ It happed that I came on a day  
Into a place, there that I sey  
Truly, the fairest companie  
Of ladies, that ever man with eie  
Had seene together in o place,  
Shall I clepe it hap either grace,  
That brought me there? not but Fortune,  
That is to lien full commune,  
The false tratieresse perverse,  
God would I could clepe her werse,  
For now she worcheth me full wo,  
And I woll tell soone why so.

“ Amonge these ladies thus echone,  
Sooth to saine, I saw one  
That was like none of the rout,



For I dare swere, without dout,  
That as the summers Sunne bright  
Is fairer, clerer, and hath more light  
Than any other planet in Heven,  
The Moone, or the sterres seven,  
For all the world so had she  
Surmounten hem all of beaute,  
Of maner, and of comlinesse,  
Of stature, and of well set gladnesse,  
Of goodly heed, and so wel besey,  
Shortly what shall I more sey?  
By God and by his halowes twelve,  
It was my swete, right all her selve,  
She had so stedfast countenaunce,  
So noble porte, and maintenaunce :  
And Love, that well harde my bone,  
Had espied me thus sone,  
That she full soone in my thought,  
As helpe me God, so was I cought  
So sodainly, that I ne toke  
No maner counsaile, but at her loke,  
And at mine herte, for why her eyen  
So gladly I trowe mine herte seyne,  
That purely tho, mine owne thought,  
Said, it were better serve her for nought,  
Than with another to be wele,  
And it was soth, for every dele,  
I will anone right tell thee why.

“ I sawe her daunce so comely,  
Carol and sing so swetely,  
Laugh, and play so womanly,  
And look so debonairly,  
So goodly speke and frendly,  
That certes I trowe that evermore,  
Nas sene so blisfull a tresore :  
For every heer on her heed,

Sothe to say, it was not reed,  
 Ne neither yelowē ne browne it nas,  
 Me thought most like gold it was,  
 And which eyen my lady had,  
 Debonaire, good, glad, and sad,  
 Simple, of good mokel, not to wide,  
 Thereto her loke nas not aside,  
 Ne overthwart, but beset so wele,  
 It drewe and tooke up everydele  
 All that on her gan behold,  
 Her eyen seemed anone she wold  
 Have mercy, folly wenden so,  
 But it was never the rather do,  
 It nas no counterfeted thing,  
 It was her owne pure loking,  
 That the goddesse, dame Nature,  
 Had made hem open by measure,  
 And close, for were she never so glad,  
 Her looking was not folish sprad,  
 Ne wildely, though that she plaid,  
 But ever me thought, her eyen said,  
 By God my wrath is al foryeve.  
 Therewith her list so well to live,  
 That dulnesse was of her adrad,  
 She n'as to sobre ne to glad,  
 In all things more measure,  
 Had never I trowe creature,  
 But many one with her loke she herte,  
 And that sate her full litel at herte :  
 For she knew nothing of hir thought,  
 But whether she knew, or knew it nought,  
 Algate she ne rought of hem a stree,  
 To get her love no nere n'as he  
 That woned at home, than he in Inde,  
 The formest was alway behinde ;  
 But good folke over all other,

She loved as man may his brother,  
Of which love she was wonder large,  
In skilfull places that bere charge :  
But which a visage had she thereto,  
Alas, my herte is wonder wo,  
That I ne can discriven it ;  
Me lacketh both English and wit,  
For to undo it at the full,  
And eke my spirites bene so dull  
So great a thing for to devise,  
I have not wit that can suffice  
To comprehend her beaute,  
But this much I dare sain, that she  
Was white, rody, fresh, and lifely hewed,  
And every day her beaute newed,  
And nigh her face was alderbest,  
For certes Nature had soch lest  
To make that faire, that truly she  
Was her chiefe patron of beaute,  
And chiefe ensample of all her werke  
And monster : for be it never so derke,  
Me thinketh I see her ever mo,  
And yet more over, though all tho  
That ever lived were now a live,  
Ne would have found to discribe  
In all her face a wicked signe,  
For it was sad, simple, and benigne.  
“ And soch a goodly swete speech,  
Had that swete, my lives leech,  
So frendely, and so well ygrounded  
Upon all reason, so well yfounded,  
And so trefable to all good,  
That I dare swere well by the rood,  
Of eloquence was never fonde  
So swete a souning faconde,  
Ne trewer tonged, ne scorned lasse,

Ne bet coude heale, that by the masse,  
I durst sweare though the pope it songe,  
That there was never yet through her tonge,  
Man ne woman greatly harmid,  
As for her, was all harme hid :  
Ne lasse flattering in her worde,  
That purely her simple recorde,  
Was found as trewe as any bond,  
Or trouth of any mans hond.

“ Ne chide she could never a dele,  
That knoweth all the world ful wele. . . .  
And soth to sayne, therewithall  
She had a witte so generall,  
So whole enclined to all good,  
That al her witte was sette by the rood,  
Without malice upon gladnesse,  
And thereto I sawe never yet a lesse  
Harmefull than she was in doying,  
I say not that she ne had knowyng  
What harme was, or els she  
Had coude no good, so thinketh me,  
And trewly, for to speake of trouth,  
But she had had, it had be routh ;  
Thereof she had so moch her dele,  
And I dare saine, and swere it wele,  
That Trough himselfe, over al and al,  
Had chose his maner principall  
In her, that was his resting place,  
Thereto she had the most grace,  
To have stedfast perseveraunce,  
And easy attempre governaunce,  
That ever I knew, or wist yet,  
So pure suffraunt was her wit,  
And reason gladly she understood,  
It folowed wel, she coude good,  
She used gladly to do wele,

These were her maners every dele. . . .

“ But wherefore that I tell thee ?

Whan I first my lady sey,  
 I was right yong, soth to sey,  
 And full great need I had to lerne,  
 Whan mine herte wolde yerne,  
 To love it was a great emprise,  
 But as my wit wolde best suffise,  
 After my yong childely wit,  
 Without drede I beset it,  
 To love her in my best wise  
 To do her worship and the servise  
 That I coude tho, by my trouth,  
 Without faining, eyther slouth,  
 For wonder faine I wolde her see,  
 So mokell it amended mee,  
 That whan I sawe her amorowe  
 I was warished of all my sorowe  
 Of all day after, till it were eve,  
 Me thought nothing might me greve,  
 Were my sorowes never so smert,  
 And yet she set so in mine herte,  
 That by my trouth, I n'old nought  
 For all this world, out of my thought  
 Leave my lady, no trewly. . . .  
 On her was all my love laid,  
 And yet she n'ist it not never a dele,  
 Not longe time, leve it wele,  
 For by right siker, I durst nought  
 For all this world tell her my thought,  
 Ne I wolde have trothed her trewly,  
 For wost thou why, she was lady  
 Of the body that had the herte,  
 And whoso hath that may not asterte.  
 “ But for to keepe me fro ydlenesse,  
 Trewly I did my businesse

To make songes, as I best coude,  
And oft time I song hem loude,  
And made songes, this a great dele,  
Although I coude nat make so wele  
Songes, ne knew the arte al,  
As coude Lamekes son, Tubal,  
That found out first the arte of songe,  
For as his brothers hammers ronge,  
Upon his anvelt, up and downe,  
Thereof he toke the first sowne.

“ But Grekes saine of Pithagoras,  
That he the first finder was  
Of the art, Aurora telleth so,  
But thereof no force of hem two :  
Algates songes thus I made,  
Of my feling, mine herte to glade ;  
And lo, this was alther first,  
I n’ot where it were the werst.

“ ‘ Lord, it maketh mine herte light,  
Whan I thinke on that swete wight,  
That is so semely one to se,  
And wish to God it might so be  
That she wold hold me for her knight,  
My lady, that is so fayre and bright.

“ Now have I told thee, soth to say,  
My first song : upon a day,  
I bethought me what wo,  
And sorowe that I suffred tho,  
For her, and yet she wist it nought,  
Ne tell her durst I not my thought :  
Alas, thought I, I can no rede,  
And but I tell her I am but dede,  
And if I tel her, to say right soth,  
I am adradde she wold be wroth,  
Alas, what shal I than do ?  
In this debate I was so wo,

Me thought mine herte brast atwain,  
So at the last, sothe for to saine,  
I bethought me that Nature  
Ne formed never in creature  
So much beauty, trewly,  
And bounty without mercy.

“In hope of that, my tale I tolde,  
With sorowe, as that I never sholde,  
For nedes, and maugre mine heed  
I must have tolde her, or be deed :  
I n’ot well how that I began,  
Full yvell reherce it I can,  
And eke, as helpe me God withall,  
I trow it was in the dismall,  
That was the ten woundes of Egipt,  
For many a word I overskipt  
In my tale for pure fere,  
Lest my wordes mis-set were,  
With sorowfull herte and woundes dede,  
Soft and quaking for pure drede,  
And shame, and stinting in my tale,  
For ferde, and mine hew al pale,  
Full oft I wexte both pale and red,  
Bowing to her I hing the hed,  
I durst not ones loke her on,  
For wit, manner, and all was gone ;  
I said, ‘ Mercy, ’ and no more,  
It n’as no game, it sate me sore.

“So at the last, soth to saine,  
Whan that mine herte was com againe,  
To tell shortly all my speech,  
With hole herte I gan her beseech  
That she wolde be my lady swete,  
And swore, and hertely gan her hete,  
Ever to be stedfast and trewe,  
And love her alway freshly newe,

And never other lady have,  
 And all her worship for to save,  
 As I best coude, I sware her this,  
 'For yours is all that ever there is,  
 For evermore, mine herte swete,  
 And never to false you, but I mete  
 I n'il, as wise God helpe me so.'

"And whan I had my tale ydo,  
 God wote, she accompted not a stre  
 Of all my tale, so thought me,  
 To tell shortly right as it is,  
 Trewly her answer it was this,  
 I can not now well countrefete  
 Her wordes, but this was the grete  
 Of her answer, she said nay  
 All utterly: alas that day!  
 The sorow I suffered and the wo,  
 That trewly Cassandra that so  
 Bewayled the destruction  
 Of Troy, and of Illion,  
 Had never such sorow as I tho;  
 I durst no more say thereto  
 For pure feare, but stale away,  
 And thus I lived full many a day,  
 That trewly, I had no need,  
 Ferther than my beddes heed,  
 Never a day to seche sorrow,  
 I found it ready every morrow,  
 For why I loved in no gere.

"So it befell another yere,  
 I thought ones I would fonde,  
 To doe her know and understonde  
 My wo, and she well understood,  
 That I ne wilned thing but good,  
 And worship, and to keepe her name,  
 Over all things, and drede her shame,



And was so busie her to serve,  
And pitie were that I should sterve,  
Sith that I wilned no harme ywis.

“ So whan my lady knew all this,  
My lady yave me all holy,  
The noble yest of her mercy,  
Saving her worship by all ways,  
Dredelesse, I mene none other ways,  
And therewith she yave me a ring,  
I trowe it was the first thing,  
But if mine herte was ywaxe  
Glad that it is no need to axe.

“ As helpe me God, I was as blive  
Raised, as from death to live,  
Of all happes the alderbest,  
The gladdest and the most at rest,  
For truely that swete wight,  
Whan I had wrong, and she the right,  
She would alway so goodly  
Foryeve me so debonairly,  
In all my youth, in all chaunce,  
She tooke in her governaunce,  
Therewith she was alway so true,  
Our joy was ever yliche newe,  
Our hertes were so even a paire,  
That never n'as that one contrarie  
To that other, for no wo  
For soth yliche they suffred tho.  
O blisse, and eke o sorow bothe,  
Yliche they were both glad and wrothe,  
All was us one, without were,  
And thus we lived full many a yere,  
So well, I can not tell how.”

“ Sir,” (quod I) “ where is she now ? ”  
“ Now ? ” (quod he) and stinte anone,  
Therewith he woxe as dedde as stone,

And saied, " Alas, that I was bore !  
That was the losse, that herebefore  
I tolde thee that I had lorne.

" Bethinke thee how I said here before,  
Thou woste full litle what thou menest,  
I have loste more than thou wenest.

" God wote alas, right that was she."

" Alas sir, how, what may that be ?"

" She is dedde : "—" Nay ?"—" Yes, by my trouth."

" Is that your losse ? by God it is routhe."

And with that worde right anone,  
They gan to strake forth, all was done  
For that time, the hart huntynge.

With that me thought that this kyng,  
Gan homeward for to ride  
Unto a place was there beside,  
Which was from us but a lite,  
A long castell with walles white,  
By saint Joha, on a rich hill,  
As me mette, but thus it fill.

Right thus me mette, as I you tell,  
That in the castell there was a bell,  
As it had smitte houres twelve,  
Therewith I awoke my selve,  
And found me lying in my bedde,  
And the booke that I had redde,  
Of Alcisne and Seis the kyng,  
And of the goddes of sleping,  
Yfound it in mine hond full even ;  
Thought I, this is so queint a sweven,  
That I would by processe of tyme,  
Fonde to put this sweven in ryme,  
As I can best, and that anon ,  
This was my sweven, now it is done.

## The Assembly of Foules.



THE lyfe so short, the craft so long to lerne,  
Th'assay so hard, so sharpe the conquering,  
The dreadful joy alway that flit so yerne,  
All this mean I by Love, that my feeling  
Astonieth with his wonderful werkyng,  
So sore ywis, that whan I on him think,  
Naught wete I wel, whether I flete or sink.

For all be that I know not Love in dede,  
Ne wot how that he quiteth folke hir hire,  
Yet happeth me full oft in bookes rede  
Of his myracles, and of his cruell ire,  
There rede I well, he woll be lorde and sire :  
I dare not say his strokes be sore,  
But God save such a lorde, I can no more.

Of usage, what for lust and what for lore,  
On bookes rede I of, as I you told,  
But wherfore speake I all this ? naught yore  
Agon, it happed me to behold  
Upon a booke was ywritten with letters old,  
And thereupon a certain thing to lerne,  
The long day full fast I radde and yerne.

For out of the old fieldes, as men saithe,  
Cometh al this new corne fro yere to yere,  
And out of old bookes, in good faithe,  
Cometh all this new science that men lere,  
But now to purpose, as of this mattere,  
To rede forth it gan me so delite,  
That all that day me thought it but a lite.

This booke of which I make mencion,  
Entitled was right thus, as I shall tell,  
Tullius of the dreame of Scipion :  
Chapiters seven it had, of Heaven and Hell,  
And Earth, and soules that therein dwell,  
Of which as shortly as I can it treate,  
Of his sentence I woll you saine the greate.

First telleth it, when Scipion was come  
In Affricke, how he meteth Massinisse,  
That him for joy, in armes hath ynome,  
Than telleth he hir speach and all the blisse,  
That was betwixt hem til the day gan misse,  
And how his auncester Affrikan so dere,  
Gan in his slepe that night til him appere. . . .

The day gan failen, and the darke night  
That reveth beastes from hir businesse,  
Beraft me my booke for lacke of light,  
And to my bedde I gan me for to dresse,  
Fulfilled of thought and besie heavinesse,  
For both I had thyng, which that I n'old,  
And eke I ne had that thing that I wold.

But finally my spirite at last,  
Forweary of my labour all that day,  
Tooke reste, that made me to slepe fast,

And in my sleepe I mette, as that I say,  
How Affrikan, right in the selfe aray  
That Scipion him saw, before that tide,  
Was come, and stode right at my beds side.

The wearie hunter sleeping in his bedde,  
The wood ayen his mind goeth anone,  
The judge dremeth how his plees be spedde,  
The carter dremeth how his cartes gone,  
The rich of gold, the knight fights with his sone,  
The sicke mette he drinketh of the tonne,  
The lover mette he hath his lady wonne.

Can I not saine, if that the cause were  
For I had radde of Affrikan beforne,  
That made me to mete that he stood there,  
But thus said he : "Thou hast thee so well borne  
In looking of mine old booke all to torne,  
Of which Macrobie raught not a lite,  
That some dele of thy labour would I quite."

Citherea, thou blisful lady swete,  
That with thy fire brond dauntest whan thee lest,  
That madest me this sweven for to mete,  
Be thou my helpe in this, for thou maist best,  
As wisely as I seigh the north northwest,  
Whan I began my sweven for to write,  
So yeve me might to rime it and endite.

This foresaid Affrikan me hent anone,  
And forthwith him to a gate brought,  
Right of a parke, walled with grene stone,  
And over the gate, with letters large ywrought,  
There were verse ywritten as me thought  
On either halfe, of full great difference,  
Of which I shall you say the playne sentence :

"Through me men gon into the blisful place  
Of hertes heale and dedly woundes cure,  
Through me men gon into the well of grace,  
There grene and lusty May shall ever endure,  
This is the way to all good aventure,  
Be glad thou reader, and thy sorrow off cast,  
All open am I, passe in and spede thee fast."

"Through me men gon" (than spake the other side)  
"Unto the mortall strokes of the speare,  
Of which Disdaine and Danger is the gide;  
There never tree shall fruit ne leaves beare,  
This streame you ledeth to the sorrowful were,  
There as the fish in pryson is all dry,  
The eschewing is onely the remedy."

These verses of gold and asure ywritten weare,  
Of which I gan astonied to behold,  
For with that one encreased all my feare,  
And with that other gan my herte to bolde,  
That one me hette, that other did me colde,  
No wit had I for errour for to chese,  
To enter or flie, or me to save or lese.

Right as betwene adamants two,  
Of even weight, a peece of yron set  
Ne hath no might to move ne to ne fro,  
For what that one may hale that other let,  
So fared I, that I n'ist where me was bet  
To entre or leave, till Affrikan my gide,  
Me hent and shove in at the gates wide.

And said, "It standeth written in thy face,  
Thine errour, though thou tell it not me,  
But dread thee not to come into this place,

For this writing is nothing meant by thee,  
Ne by none, but he Love's servaunt bee,  
For thou of love hast lost thy tast of gesse,  
As sicke men hath, of swete and bitternesse.

"But natheles, although thou be dull,  
That thou canst not doe, yet mayst thou see,  
For many a man that may not stand a pull,  
Yet liketh it him at the wrestlyng for to be,  
And demeth yet, whether he doe bet, or he,  
And if thou haddest connyng for t'endite,  
I shall thee shew matter of to write."

And with that my hand in his he toke anon,  
Of which I comfort caught, and went in fast,  
But Lord so I was glad, and well begon,  
For over all, where I mine eyen cast,  
Were trees clad with leaves, that aie shall last  
Eche in his kind, with colour fresh and grene,  
As emeraude, that joy it was to sene.

The bilder oke, and eke the hardy asshe,  
The pillar elme, the coffre unto caraine,  
The boxe pipe tree, holme to whippes lasshe,  
The sailing firre, the cipres death to plaine,  
The shooter ewe, the aspe for shaftes plaine,  
The olive of peace, and eke the dronken vine,  
The victor palme, the laurer too divine.

A gardein saw I full of blosomed bowis,  
Upon a river in a grene mede,  
There as sweetnesse evermore inough is,  
With floures white, blewe, yelow, and rede,  
And cold welle streames, nothing dede,  
That swommen full of smale fishes light,  
With finnes rede, and scales silver bright.

On every bough the birdes heard I sing,  
With voice of angell in hir armonie,  
That busied hem hir birdes forth to bring,  
The little pretty conies to hir play gan hie,  
And further all about I gan espie  
The dredeful roe, the buck, the hart, and hind,  
Squirrels, and beastes small of gentle kind.

Of instruments of stringes in accorde  
Heard I so play a ravishing swetnesse,  
That God, that maker is of all and Lorde,  
Ne heard never better, as I gesse,  
Therewith a wind, unneth it might be lesse,  
Made in the leaves grene a noise soft  
Accordant to the foules song on loft.

The aire of the place so attempre was,  
That never was ther grevance of hot ne cold,  
There was eke every holsome spice and gras,  
Ne no man may there waxe sicke ne old,  
Yet was there more joy o thousand fold,  
Than I can tell or ever could or might,  
There is ever clere day, and never night. . . .

Whan I was commen ayen into the place  
That I of spake, that was so soote and grene,  
Forth walked I tho, my selven to solace,  
Tho was I ware, where there sate a quene,  
That as of light the sommer Sunne shene  
Passeth the sterre, right so over mesure,  
She fairer was than any creature.

And in a launde, upon an hill of floures,  
Was set this noble goddessse Nature,  
Of branches were her halles and here boures



Ywrought, after her craft and her mesure,  
Ne there n'as foul that cometh of engendrure,  
That there ne were prest in her presence,  
To take hir dome and yeve her audience.

For this was on saint Valentines day,  
Whan every foule cometh to chese hir make,  
Of every kind that men thinke may,  
And that so huge a noise gan they make,  
That earth, sea, and tree, and every lake,  
So full was, that unneth there was space  
For me to stand, so full was all the place.

And right as Alain, in the Plaint of Kinde,  
Deviseth Nature of such araie and face,  
In suche aray men might her there finde.  
This noble empresse full of all grace,  
Bad every foule take hir owne place,  
As they were wont alway, fro yere to yere,  
On saint Valentines day, standen there.

That is to say, the foules of ravine  
Were highest set, and than the foules smale,  
That eaten as that nature would encline,  
As worme or thing, of which I tell no tale,  
But water foule sat lowest in the dale,  
And foules that liveth by seed sat on the grene,  
And that so many, that wonder was to sene.

There might men the royall egle find,  
That with his sharpe looke perseth the Son,  
And other egles of a lower kind,  
Of which that clerkes well devisen con;  
There was the tyrant with his fethers don,  
And grene, I mean the goshauke that doth pine  
To birdes, for his outrageous ravine.

The gentle faucon, that with his fete distreineth  
The kings hand, the hardy sperhauke eke,  
The quailles foe, the merlion that peineth  
Himself full oft the larke for to seke,  
There was the dove, with her eyen meke,  
The jelous swan, ayenst his deth that singeth,  
The owl eke, that of deth the bode bringeth.

The crane, the geaunt, with his trompes sounne,  
The thief the chough, and the chattering pie,  
The scorning jaye, the eles foe the heroune,  
The false lapwing, full of trecherie,  
The stare, that the counsaile can bewrie,  
The tame ruddocke, and the coward kite,  
The cocke, that horiloge is of thorpes lite.

The sparowe Venus' son, and the nightingale  
That clepeth forth the fresh leaves new,  
The swalowe, murdrer of the bees smale  
That maken honie of floures fresh of hew,  
The wedded turtell, with his herte true,  
The pecocke, with his angel fethers bright,  
The fesaunt, scorner of the cocke by night.

The waker gose, the cuckowe ever unkind,  
The popingey, full of delicasy,  
The drake, stroier of his owne kind,  
The storke, wreker of aduoutry,  
The hote cormeraunt, ful of glotony,  
The ravin and the crowe, with her voice of care,  
The throstell olde, and the frostie feldefare.

What should I say? of foules of every kind,  
That in this world have fethers and stature,  
Men might in that place assembled find,

36      *THE ASSEMBLY OF FOULES.*

Before that noble goddesse of Nature,  
And eche of them did his busie cure,  
Benignely to chese, or for to take  
By her accorde, his formell or his make.

But to the point : Nature held on her hond,  
A formell egle, of shape the gentillest,  
That ever she among her workes fond,  
The most benigne, and eke the goodliest,  
In her was every vertue, at his rest  
So farforth, that Nature her selfe had blisse,  
To looke on her, and oft her beeke to kisse.

*[Three eagles become rivals for the formell's favour.]*

Of al my life, sith that day I was borne,  
So gentle plee in love or other thing,  
Ne herde never no man me beforne,  
Who so that had leiser and conning  
For to rehearse their chere, and there speaking;  
And from the morrow gan this spech last,  
Till downward went the Sunne wonder fast.

The noyse of foules for to be delivered,  
So loude rang, "Have don and let us wend,"  
That well weend I, the wood had al to shiverd :  
"Come off," they cryd, "alas, ye will us shend,  
Whan shal your cursed pleding have an end?  
How should a judge either party leve,  
For ye or nay, without any preve?"

The goos, the duck, and the cuckowe also,  
So cried "Keke, keke, Cuckow, Queke, queke, bie,"

Through mine eares the noise went tho.  
The goos said than " Al this n'is worth a flie,  
But I can shape hereof a remedie,  
And will say my verdite, faire and swithe,  
For water foule, whoso be wroth or blithe."

" And I for worm foule," said the fole cuckow,  
" For I will of mine own authorite,  
For common spede, take on me the charge now,  
For to deliver us it is great charite."  
" Ye may abide a while, yet perde,"  
(Quod the turtel) " if it be your will,  
A wight may speak, it were as good be still.

" I am a sede foule, one the unworthiest,  
That wote I well, and leest of conning,  
But better is that a wights tonge rest,  
Than entremete him of such doing  
Of which he neither rede can nor sing,  
And who so it doth, full foule himself acloyeth,  
For office uncommitted oft annoyeth."

Nature, which that alway had an eare  
To murmure of the lewdenesse behind,  
With facond voice said, " Hold your tongues there  
And I shall soone, I hope, a counsaile find,  
You for to deliver, and fro this noyse unbind :  
I charge of every flock ye shall one call,  
To say the verdite of you foules all." . . .

The water foules have their heads laid  
Togider, and of short avisement,  
Whan everiche had this verdite said,

38      *THE ASSEMBLY OF FOULES.*

They said soothly all by one assent,  
How that the goos, with the facond gent,  
That so desireth to pronounce our nede,  
Shal tel her tale, and praid to God her spede.

And for these water foules tho began  
The goose to speake, and in her cakeling  
She said, "Peace now, take keep every man,  
And herken which a reason I shall forth bring,  
My witte is sharpe, I love no tarrying,  
I say, I rede him, tho he were my brother,  
But she will love him, let him love another."

"Lo, here a parfite reason of a goose"  
(Quod the sperhauke) "never mote she the,  
Lo, such a thing it is to have a tongue lose:  
Now parde foole, yet were it better for the  
Have held thy peace than shewd thy nicete;  
It lieth nat in his wit, nor in his will,  
But sooth is said, a fole cannot be still."

The laughter arose of gentill foules all,  
And right anone the seed foules chosen had  
The turtle true, and gan her to hem call,  
And preyed her to say the sooth sad  
Of this matter, and asked what she rad?  
And she answered, that plainly her entent  
She would shew, and soothly what she ment.

"Nay, God forbede a lover should chaunge,"  
The turtle said (and wex for shame all red)  
"Though that his lady evermore be straunge,

Yet let him serve her alway, till he be deed,  
Forsooth, I praise not the gooses reed,  
For tho she died, I would none other make,  
I will be hers, till that the death me take."

"Well ybourded" (quod the duck) "by my hat,  
That men should love alway causelesse,  
Who can a reason find, or wit in that?  
Daunceth he merry that is mirthlesse?  
Who should recke of that is retchlesse?  
Ye queke yet," quod the duck, "full well and fair,  
There be mo sterres in the skie than a pair."

•

"Now fie churle," quod the gentle tercelet,  
"Out of the dunghill came that word aright,  
Thou canst not see which thing is well beset,  
Thou farest by love as owles do by light,  
The day hem blindeth, full well they see by night,  
Thy kind is of so low wretchedness,  
That what love is thou canst not see nor gess."

Tho gan the cuckow put him forth in preace,  
For foule that eateth worme, and said blive :  
"So I," quod he, "may have my make in peace,  
I retch not how long that ye strive,  
Let ech of hem be soleine all hir live,  
This is my rede, sens they may nat accord,  
This short lesson needeth not record."

"Ye, have the glutton filde his paunch  
Than are we well," said the emerlon,  
"Thou murdrer of the heysugge on the braunch

That brought thee forth, thou rufol glutton,  
 Live thou solein, wormes corruption,  
 For no force is of lack of thy nature,  
 Go, leude be thou while the world may dure." . . .

[*The formell is referred to for a decision ; but dooms her  
 suitors to a year's suspense.*]

"To you speke I, ye terceletis," (quod Nature)  
 "Beth of good herte, and serveth all three,  
 A yeare is not so long to endure,  
 And ech of you paine him in his degree,  
 For to do well, for God wote quit is she  
 Fro you this year, what after so befall,  
 This entremes is dressed for you all."

And whan this werk brought was to an end,  
 To every foule Nature yave his make,  
 By even accord, and on hir way they wend,  
 And Lord the blisse and joy that they make,  
 For ech of hem gan other in his wings take,  
 And with hir neckes ech gan other winde,  
 Thanking alway the noble goddess of kinde.

But first were chosen foules for to sing,  
 As yere by yere was alway his usaunce,  
 To sing a roundel at hir departing,  
 To do Nature honour and pleasaunce ;  
 The note I trow maked was in Fraunce,  
 The words were such as ye may here find,  
 The next verse as I now have in mind.  
 Qui bien ayme tard oublye.

"Now welcome summer, with thy sunnes soft,  
That hast this winter weathers overshake,  
Saint Valentine, thou art full high on loft,  
Which drivest away the long nights blake ;  
Thus singen smale foules for thy sake,  
Well have they cause for to gladen oft,  
Sens each of hem recovered hath his make,  
Full blisful may they sing whan they awake."

And with the shouting whan hir song was do,  
That the foules made at hir flight away,  
I woke, and other bookes took me to  
To rede upon and yet I rede alway,  
I hope ywis to rede so some day,  
That I shall mete something for to fare  
The bet, and thus to rede I nill not spare.

EXPLICIT.



## Troilus and Creseide.



### INCIPIT LIBER PRIMUS.

*[Creseide's father, Calcas, has left Troy and gone over to the Greeks. Creseide, deserted, lives in retirement with Hector's promise of protection.]*

AND so befell, whan comen was the time  
Of Aprill, whan clothed is the mede,  
With new grene, of lustie veer the prime,  
And with sweet-smelling floures white and rede  
In sundrie wise shewed, as I rede,  
The folke of Troie, their observances old,  
Palladions feast went for to hold.

Unto the temple in all their best wise,  
Generally there went many a wight,  
To hearken to Palladions servise,  
And namely many a lustie knight,  
And many a ladie fresh, and maiden bright,  
Full well arraied bothe most and least,  
Both for the season and the high feast.

Among these other folke was Creseida,  
In widdowes habite blacke : but natheles  
Right as our first letter is now an a,

In beautie first so stood she makeles,  
Her goodly looking gladed all the prees,  
Nas never seene thing to be praised so derre,  
Nor under cloude blacke so bright a sterre,

As was Creseide, they sayden everichone,  
That her behelden in her blacke wede,  
And yet she stood full lowe and still alone  
Behinde other folke in little brede,  
And nie the dore under shames drede,  
Simple of attire, and debonaire of chere,  
With full assured looking and manere.

This Troilus, as he was wont to guide  
His yonge knightes, lad hem up and doun,  
In thilke large temple on every side,  
Beholding aie the ladies of the toun,  
Now here now there, for no devotioun  
Had he to none, to reven him his rest,  
But gan to praise and lacke whom him lest.

And in his walk full fast he gan to waiten,  
If knight or squier of his companie,  
Gan for to sike, or let his eyen baiten  
On any woman, that he coud espie,  
He would smile, and hold it a follie,  
And say hem thus : " O Lord she sleepeth soft  
For love of thee, whan thou turnest full oft.

" I have heard tell pardieux of your living,  
Ye lovers, and eke your lewde observances,  
And which a labour folke have in winning  
Of love, and in keeping such doutaunces,  
And whan your pray is lost, wo and penaunces :  
O, very fooles, blinde and nice be ye,  
There is not one can ware by another be."

And with that word he gan cast up the brow,  
Ascaunces, lo, is this not well yspoken,  
At which the god of love gan looken low,  
Right for dispite, and shope him to be wroken.  
He kidde anone his bowe was not broken :  
For sodainly he hitte him at the full,  
And yet as proude a peacocke gan he pull.

O blinde world, o blind entention,  
How often falleth all the effect contraire  
Of surquedrie and foule presumption,  
For caught is proud, and caught is debonaire :  
This Troilus is clomben on the staire,  
And little weneth that he mote descenden,  
But all day it faileth that fooles wenden.

As proud Bayard beginneth for to skippe  
Out of the way, so pricketh him his corne,  
Till he a lash have of the longe whippe,  
Than thinketh he, " Tho I prauce all beforne  
First in the traise, full fat and new yshorne,  
Yet am I but an horse, and horses law  
I must endure, and with my feeres draw."

So fared it by this fiers and proud knight,  
Though he a worthy kinges sonne were,  
And wende nothing had had suche might,  
Ayenst his will, that should his herte stere,  
Yet with a looke his herte woxe on fire,  
That he that now was most in pride above,  
Woxe sodainly most subject unto love.

Forthy ensample taketh of this man,  
Ye wise, proud, and worthy folkes all,  
To scornen Love, which that so soone can

The freedome of your hertes to him thrall,  
For ever it was, and ever it be shall,  
That Love is he that all thinges may bind,  
For no man may fordo the law of kind.

That this be sooth hath preved and doth yet,  
For this (I trowe) ye know all and some,  
Men reden not that folke han greater wit  
Than they that han ben most with love ynome,  
And strengest folk been therewith overcome,  
The worthyest and greatest of degree,  
This was and is, and yet man shall it see.

And trueliche that sitte well to be so,  
For alderwisest han therewith ben pleased,  
And they that han ben aldermost in wo,  
With love han ben comforted and most eased,  
And oft it hath the cruell herte appeased,  
And worthy folke made worthier of name,  
And causeth most to dreden vice and shame.

Now sith it may nat goodly be withstond,  
And is a thing so vertuous and kind,  
Refuseth nought to love for to ben bond,  
Sith as him selven list he may you bind ;  
The yerde is bette that bowen woll and wind  
Than that that brest, and therefore I you rede,  
Now followeth him, that so well can you lede.

But for to tellen forth in speciall,  
As of this kinges sonne, of which I told,  
And leven other thing collaterall,  
Of him thinke I my tale forth to hold,  
Both of his joy, and of his cares cold,  
And his werke, as touching this matere,  
For I it gan, I woll thereto refere.

Within the temple he went him forth playing  
This Troilus, of every wight about,  
Now on this lady, and now on that looking,  
Where so she were of toun, or of without :  
And upon case befell, that through a rout  
His eye pierced, and sō deepe it went  
Till on Creseide it smote, and there it stent.

And sodainely for wonder wext astonned,  
And gan her bet behold in thrifty wise :  
"O very God," thought he, "wher hast thou  
wonne,  
That art so faire and goodly to devise ?"  
Therewith his herte gan to spread and rise,  
And softe sighed, least men might him here,  
And caught ayen his firste playing chere.

She n'as nat with the most of her stature,  
But all her limmes so well answering  
Weren to womanhood, that creature  
Was never lasse mannish in seeming.  
And eke the pure wise of her meaning  
Shewed well, that men might in her gesse  
Honour, estate, and womanly noblesse.

Tho Troilus, right wonder well withall,  
Gan for to like her meaning and her chere,  
Which somdele deignous was, for she let fall  
Her looke a little aside, in such manere  
Ascaunces, what may I not stonden here,  
And after that her looking gan she light,  
That never thought him seen so good a sight.

And of her looke in him there gan to quicken  
So great desire, and such affection,  
That in his hertes bottome gan to sticken

Of her his fixe, and deepe impression :  
And though he earst had pored up and down,  
Than was he glad his hornes in to shrinke,  
Unnethes wist he how to looke or winke.

Lo, he that lete him selven so cunning,  
And scorned hem that loves paines drien,  
Was full unware that Love had his dwelling  
Within the subtile streames of her eyen,  
That sodainely him thought he felte dyen,  
Right with her looke, the spirite in his hert,  
Blessed be Love, that thus can folke convert.

She thus in blacke, liking to Troilus,  
Over all thing he stood for to behold :  
But his desire, ne wherefore he stood thus,  
He neither chere made, ne worde told,  
But from aferre, his manner for to hold,  
On other thing sometime his looke he cast,  
And eft on her, while that the service last :

And after this, nat fulliche all awhaped,  
Out of the temple, eselich he went,  
Repenting him that ever he had japed  
Of Loves folke, least fully the discent  
Of scorne fell on himselfe, but what he ment,  
Lest it were wist on any manner side,  
His woe he gan dissimulen and hide.

Whan he was fro the temple thus departed,  
He straight anone unto his pallace turneth,  
Right with her loke through shotten and darterd,  
All faineth he in lust that he sojourneth,  
And all his chere and speech also he bourneth,  
And aie of Loves servaunts every while  
Him selfe to wrie, at hem he gan to smile,

And saied, "Lord, so they live all in lust  
Ye lovers, for the cunningest of you,  
That serveth most ententifelich and best  
Him tite as often harme thereof as prow,  
Your hire is quit ayen, ye, God wote how,  
Not wele for wele, but scorne for good servise,  
In faith your order is ruled in good wise.

"In no certaine been your observaunces,  
But it onely a sely few points be,  
Ne nothing asketh so great attendaunces,  
As doth your laie, and that know all ye :  
But that is not the worst, as mote I the,  
But told I you the worst point, I leve,  
All sayd I sooth, ye woulden at me greve.

"But take this : that ye lovers oft eschew,  
Or else done of good entention,  
Full oft thy ladie woll it misse constrew,  
And deeme it harme in her opinion,  
And yet if she for other encheson  
Be wroth, than shalt thou have a groin anon :  
Lord, well is him that may been of you one."

But for all this, whan that he seeth his time  
He held his peace, none other bote him gained,  
For Love began his feathers so to lime,  
That well unneth unto his folke he fained,  
That other busie needes him distrained,  
So woe was him, that what to done he n'ist,  
But bad his folke to gon where as hem list.

And whan that he in chamber was alone,  
He doune upon his beddes feet him set,  
And first he gan to sike, and eft to grone,

And thought aie on her so withouten let,  
That as he sate and woke, his spirit met  
That he her saw and temple, and all the wise  
Right of her looke, and gan it new avise.

Thus gan he make a mirrour of his mind,  
In which he saw all wholly her figure,  
And that he well coud in his herte find  
It was to him a right good aventure  
To love such one, and if he did his cure  
To serven her, yet might he fall in grace,  
Or else, for one of her servantes pace.

Imagining, that travaile nor grame  
Ne might for so goodly one be lorne  
As she, ne him for his desire no shame  
All were it wist, but in prise and up borne  
Of all lovers, well more than beforne.  
Thus argumented he, in his ginning,  
Full unavised of his wo comming.

Thus took he purpose Loves craft to sewe  
And thought he would worken privily  
First for to hide his desire in mewe  
From everie wight iborne, all overly,  
But he might ought recovered been thereby,  
Remembring him, that love too wide yblowe  
Yelte bitter fruite, though sweet seed be sowe.

And over all this, full mokell more he thought  
What for to speake, and what to holden inne  
And what to arten, er to love he sought,  
And on a song anone right to beginne,  
And gan loude on his sorrow for to winne :  
For with good hope he gan fully assent,  
Creseide for to love, and nought repent.



And of his song not onely his sentence,  
As write mine authour called Lolius,  
But plainely save our tongues difference,  
I dare well say, in all that Troilus  
Sayed in his song, lo every word right thus,  
As I shall saine, and who so list it heare  
Lo this next verse, he may it finde there.

## THE SONG OF TROILUS.

"If no love is, O God, what feele I so?  
And if love is, what thing and which is he?  
If love be good, from whence cometh my wo?  
If it be wicke, a wonder thinketh me,  
Whan every torment and adversite  
That cometh of him, may to me savery think:  
For aie thirst I the more that iche it drinke.

"And if that at mine owne lust I brenne,  
From whence cometh my wailing and my plaint  
If harme agree me, whereto plaine I thenne,  
I n'ot, ne why unwery that I feint.  
O quicke death, o sweete harme so quaint,  
How may of thee in me be such quantite,  
But if that I consent that it so be?

"And if that I consent, I wrongfully  
Complaine ywis: thus possed to and fro,  
All sterilese within a bote am I  
Amidde the sea, atwixen windes two,  
That in contrary stonden ever mo.  
Alas, what is this wonder maladie?  
For heat of cold, for cold of heat I die."

And to the god of love thus sayed he  
With pitous voice, "O lord, now yours is

My spirite, which that oughten yours to be,  
You thank I, lord, that han me brought to this :  
But whether goddessse or woman ywis  
She be, I n'ot, which that ye do me serve,  
But as her man I woll aie live and sterue.

"Ye stonden in her eyen mightily,  
As in a place to your vertue digne :  
Wherefore, lord, if my servise or I  
May liken you, so beth to me benigne,  
For mine estate royall here I resigne  
Into her honde, and with full humble cheer,  
Become her man, as to my lady deer."

In him ne deigned sparen blood royall  
The fire of love wherefro God me blesse,  
Ne him forbare in no degree, for all  
His vertue, or his excellent prowesse,  
But held him as his thrall lowe in distresse,  
And brend him so in sundry wise aie newe,  
That sixty times a day he lost his hewe.

So mochell day fro day his owne thought  
For lust to her gan quicken and encrease,  
That everiche other charge he set at nought,  
Forthy full oft, his hot fire to cease,  
To seen her goodly looke he gan to prease,  
For thereby to ben eased well he wend,  
And aie the nere he was, the more he brend.

For aie the nere the fire the hotter is,  
This (trow I) knoweth all this companie :  
But were he ferre or nere, I dare say this,  
By night or day, for wisdomes or follie,

His herte, which that is his brestes eie,  
Was aie on her, that fairer was to seene  
Than ever was Heleine, or Polixene.

Eke of the day there passed not an hour,  
That to himselfe a thousand times he sayd,  
"God goodly, to whome I serve and labour  
As I best can, now would to God Creseide  
Ye woulden on me rue, er that I deide :  
My dere herte alas, mine hele and my hew,  
And life is lost, but ye woll on me rew."

All other dredes weren from him fled,  
Both of th'assiege, and his savation,  
Ne in desire none other formes bred,  
But arguments to his conclusion,  
That she on him would have compassion  
And he to ben her man, while he may dure,  
Lo here his life, and from his death his cure.

The sharpe showers fell of armes preve  
That Hector or his other brethren didden  
Ne made him onely therefore ones meve,  
And yet was he, where so men went or ridden,  
Found one the best, and lengest time abiden  
There perill was, and eke did such travaile  
In armes, that to thinke it was a marvaile.

But for none hate he to the Greekes had,  
Ne also for the rescous of the toun,  
Ne made him thus in armes for to mad.  
But onely lo, for this conclusion,  
To liken her the bet for his renoun :  
Fro day to day in armes so he sped,  
That all the Greekes as the death him dred. . .

"But now help God, and ye my sweet, for whom  
I plaine, ycaught ye never wight so fast :  
O mercie, deare herte, and helpe me from  
The death, for I, while that my life may last,  
More than my selfe woll love you to my last,  
And with some frendly look gladeth me swete,  
Though never more thing ye to me behete."

These wordes, and full many another mo  
He spake, and called ever in his compleint  
Her name, for to tellen her his wo,  
Til nigh that he in salte teares was dreint,  
All was for nought, she heard nat his pleint :  
And whan that he bethought on that follie,  
A thousand fold his woe gan multiplie.

Bewailing in his chamber thus alone,  
A friend of his, that called was Pandare,  
Came ones in unware, and heard him grone,  
And saw his friend in such distresse and care.  
"Alas," (quod he) "who causeth all this fare?  
O mercy God, what unhappe may this mene?  
Han now thus sone the Greeks made you lene?

"Or hast thou some remorse of conscience?  
And art now fall in some devotion,  
And wailest for thy sinne and thine offence,  
And hast for ferde caught contrition?  
God save hem, that besieged han our toun,  
That so can laie our jollitie on presse,  
And bring our lustie folke to holynesse."

These wordes said he for the nones all,  
That with such thing he might him angry maken,  
And with his anger done his sorrow fall,

As for a time, and his courage awaken :  
But well wist he, as far as tongues spoken,  
Ther nas a man of greater hardinesse  
Than he, ne more desired worthinesse. . . .

[*Troilus at last confesses that his malady is—*

“Love, ayenst the which who so defendeth  
Him selven most, him alderlest availeth.”]

“How hast thou thus unkindly and long  
Hid this fro me, thou fool?” (quod Pandarus)  
“Peraventure thou maist after such one long,  
That mine avise anone may helpen us :”  
“This were a wonder thing,” (quod Troilus)  
“Thou couldest never in love thy selfen wisse,  
How divell maiest thou bringen me to blisse?”

“Ye Troilus, now hearken,” (quod Pandare)  
“Though I be nice, it happeth often so,  
That one that of axes doeth full evil fare,  
By good counsail can keep his frend ther fro :  
I have my selfe seen a blinde man go  
There as he fell, that could looken wide,  
A foole may eke a wise man oft guide.

“A whetstone is no carving instrument,  
But yet it maketh sharpe kerving tolis,  
And after thou wost that I have aught miswent,  
Eschue thou that, for such thing to schole is,  
Thus often wise men bewaren by foolis :  
If thou so doe, thy wit is well bewared,  
By his contrarie is everie thing declared.

[*Pandarus, after much discussion and disquisition, demands the final confidence.*]

"Looke up, I say, and tell me what she is  
Anone, that I may gone about thy need :  
Know ich her aught, for my love tell me this ;  
Than would I hope rather for to speed."  
Tho gan the veine of Troilus to bleed,  
For he was hit, and woxe all redde for shame,  
"Aha," (quod Pandare) "here beginneth game."

And with that word, he gan him for to shake,  
And sayd him thus, "Thou shalt her name tell :"  
But tho gan sely Troilus for to quake,  
As though men should han had him into Hell,  
And sayed, "Alas, of all my woe the well,  
Than is my sweete foe called Creseide,"  
And well nigh with that word for feare he deide.

And whan that Pandare herd her name neven,  
Lord, he was glad, and saied, "Friend so deere,  
Now fare a right, for Joves name in Heaven,  
Love hath beset thee well, be of good chcere,  
For of good name, and wisdom, and manere  
She hath inough, and eke of gentlenesse :  
If she be faire, thou wost thy selfe, I gesse. . . .

[*Pandarus undertakes to plead his friend's cause with Creseide ; and in the second book we find him playing the envoy to such good effect that his niece, without pledging herself to love, promises to be kind to Troilus.*]

With this he toke his leave, and home he went,  
Ye, Lord, how he was glad, and well bigon :  
Creseide arose, no lenger she ne stent,  
But streight into her closet went anon,

And set her doune, as still as any stone,  
And every word gan up and doune to wind,  
That he had said as it came her to mind.

And woxe somdele astonied in her thought,  
Right for the newe case, but whan that she  
Was full avised, tho found she right nought,  
Of perill, why that she ought aferde be :  
For man may love of possibilitie  
A woman so, his herte may to brest,  
And she nat love ayen, but if her lest.

But as she sat alone, and thought thus,  
Th'ascrie arose at skarmoch all without,  
And men cried in the strete, " Se Troilus  
Hath right now put to flight the Grekes rout."  
With that gonne all her meine for to shout :  
" A, go we se, cast up the gates wide,  
For through this strete he mote to paleis ride."

For other waie is fro the gates none,  
Of Dardanus, there open is the cheine :  
With that come he, and all his folke anone  
And easie pace riding, in routes tweine,  
Right as his happy day was, soth to seine :  
For which men saith, may not disturbed be  
That shall betide of necessitie.

This Troilus sat on his baie stede  
All armed save his head full richely,  
And wounded was his horse, and gan to blede,  
On which he rode a pace full softly :  
But such a knightly sight truely  
As was on him, was nat withouten faile  
To loke on Mars, that god is of battaile.

So like a man of armes, and a knight  
He was to seen, fulfilled of high prowesse,  
For both he had a body, and might  
To doen that thing, as well as hardinesse,  
And eke to seen him in his geare dresse  
So freshe, so yong, so weldy semed he,  
It was an heaven upon him for to se.

His helme to hewen was in twenty places,  
That by a tissue hong, his backe behind,  
His shelde to dashed with swerds and with maces,  
In which men might many an arowe find,  
That thirled had both horn, nerfe, and rind :  
And aie the people cried, " Here cometh our joie,  
And next his brother, holder up of Troie."

For which he wext a little redde for shame  
Whan he so heard the people upon him crien,  
That to behold it was a noble game,  
How soberliche he cast adoune his eyen :  
Creseide anon gan all his chere espien,  
And let it so soft in hir herte sinke,  
That to her self she said, " Who yave me drinke ?"

For all her own thought, she woxe all redde,  
Remembring her right thus, " Lo this is he,  
Which that mine uncle swereth he mote dedde,  
But I on him have mercie and pite :"  
And with that thought, for pure ashamed she,  
Gan in her hedde to pull, and that as fast,  
While he and all the people forth by past.

And gan to cast, and rollen up and down  
Within her thought his excellent prowesse,  
And his estate, and also his renoun,



His witte, his shape, and eke his gentillesse,  
But most her favour was, for his distresse  
Was all for her, and thought it were a routh,  
To slaen soche one, if that he meant trouth.

Now might some envious jangle thus,  
"This was a sodain love, how might it be,  
That she so lightly loved Troilus?  
Right for the first sight: ye, parde?"  
Now whoso saied so, mote he never the:  
For every thing a ginning hath it nede  
Er all be wrought, withouten any drede.

For I said nat that she so sodainly  
Yafe him her love, but that she gan encline  
To liken him tho, and I have told you why:  
And after that, his manhode, and his pine,  
Made that love within her gan to mine:  
For which by processe, and by good service  
He wanne her love, and in no sodain wise. . . .

And after that her thought gan for to clere  
And saied, "He which that nothing undertaketh  
Nothing achieveth, be him loth or dere;"  
And with another thought her herte quaketh  
Than slepeth hope, and after drede awaketh,  
Now hote, now cold, but thus bitwixen twey  
She rist her up, and went hir for to pley.

Adoune the staire anon right tho she went  
Into her gardine, with her neces three,  
And up and down, they maden many a went  
Flexippe and she, Tarbe, and Antigone,  
To plaien, that to joie was to see,  
And other of her women a great rout  
Her followeth in the gardaine all about.

This yerde was large, and railed al the alies  
And shadowed wel, with blosomy bowes grene,  
And benched newe, and sonded all the waies  
In which she walketh arme in arme betwene,  
Till at the last Antigone the shene  
Gan on a Troian song to singen clere,  
That it an Heven was her voice to here.

She saied, "O Love, to whom I have, and shall  
Been humble subject, true in mine entent  
As I best can, to you, lorde, yeve iche all  
For evermore mine hertes lust to rent :  
For never yet thy grace to no wight sent  
So blisfull cause as me, my life to lede  
In all joie and suretie, out of drede.

"The blisfull god, hath me so well beset  
In love ywis, that all that beareth life  
Imaginen ne could how to be bet,  
For, lorde, withouten jelousie or strife  
I love one, which that moste is ententife  
To serven well, unwerily or unfained,  
That ever was, and lest with harme distained,

"As he that is the well of worthinesse,  
Of trouth ground, mirrour of goodlihedde,  
Of wit Apollo, stone of silkernesse,  
Of vertue roote, of luste finder and hedde,  
Through whiche is all sorrowe fro me dedde :  
Ywis I love him best, so doeth he me,  
Now good thrift have he, where so ever he be.

"Whom should I thanken but you, god of love,  
Of all this blisse, in which to bathe I ginne.  
And thanked be ye, lorde, for that I love,  
This is the right life that I am inne,

To flemen all maner vice and sinne :  
This doeth me so to vertue for to entende  
That daie by daie I in my will amende.

“ And who that saieth that for to love is vice,  
Or thraldome, though he fele it in distresse,  
He either is envious, or right nice,  
Or is unmightie for his shreudnesse,  
To loven, for soch maner folke I gesse  
Diffamen Love, as nothing of him know  
They speaken, but they bent never his bowe.

“ What is the Sunne worse of his kind right,  
Though that a man, for feblennesse of his eyen  
Maie not endure on it to se for bright ?  
Or love the worst, that wretches on it crien ?  
No wele is worth, that may no sorrowe drien :  
And forthy, who that hath an hedde of verre  
Fro cast of stones ware him in the werre.

“ But I with all mine herte and all my might,  
As I have saied, woll love unto my last  
My owne dere herte and all mine owne knight,  
In whiche mine herte growen is so fast  
And his in me, that it shall ever last :  
All dredde I first love ʒ to begin,  
Now wote I well there is no perill in.”

And of her song right with that word she stent,  
And therewithall, “ Now nece ” (quod Creseide)  
“ Who made this song now with so good entent ? ”  
Antigone answerede anon and saide,  
“ Madame ywis the goodliest maide  
Of great estate in all the toun of Troie  
And led her life in most honour and joie.”

"Forsothe so semeth it by her song,"  
Quod tho Creseide, and gan therewith to sike,  
And saied : " Lorde, is there soche blisse among  
These lovers, as they can faire endite : "  
"Ye, wisse," quod fresh Antigone the white,  
"For all the folke that have or been on live  
Ne con well the blisse of love describe.

"But wene ye that every wretche wote  
The parfite blisse of love? why naie ywis :  
They wenen all be love, if one be hote :  
Do waie do waie, they wote nothing of this.  
Men mote asken of saintes, if it is  
Ought faire in Heven, and why? for they can tell,  
And aske fendes, if it be foule in Hell."

Creseide unto the purpose naught answerde,  
But saied, "Ywis it woll be night as fast,"  
But every worde, which that she of her herde,  
She gan to printen in her herte fast,  
And aie gan love her lasse for to agast  
Than it did erst, and sinken into her herte,  
That she waxe somewhat able to convarte.

The daies honour, and the Heavens eye,  
The nightes foe, all this clepe I thee Sonne,  
Gan westren fast, and downward for to wrie,  
As he that had his daies course yronne,  
For lacke of light, and sterres for to apere,  
That she and all her folke in went yfere.

So whan it liked her to gon to rest,  
And voided weren they that voiden ought,  
She saied, that to slepen well her leste :

Her women sone till her bedde her brought :  
Whan al was hust, than lay she still and thought  
Of all this thing the maner and the wise,  
Rehearse it needeth not, for ye been wise.

A nightingale upon a cedre grene  
Under the chamber wall, there as she laie,  
Full loude song ayen the Mone shene  
Paraventure, in his birdes wise, a laie  
Of love, that made her herte freshe and gaie,  
That herkened she so long in good entent,  
Till at the last the dedde sleepe her hent.

And as she slept, anon right tho her met,  
How that an egle fethered white as bone,  
Under her brest his longe clawes yset,  
And out her herte he rent, and that anon,  
And did his herte into her brest to gon,  
Of which she nought agrose, ne nothing smart,  
And forth he flieth, with herte left for herte. . . .

*[Pandarus meantime induces Troilus to write to his mistress ; and furnishes full instructions.]*

“ Touching thy letter, thou art wise inough,  
I wot thou n’ilte it deigneliche endite,  
As make it with these argumentes tough,  
Ne scriveinishe or craftely thou it write,  
Beblotte it with thy teares eke alite,  
And if thou write a goodly word all soft,  
Though it be good, rehearse it not too oft.

“ For though the best harpoure upon live  
Would on the best souned jolly harpe  
That ever was, with all his fingers five

Touch aye o string, or aye o warble harpe,  
Where his nailes pointed never so sharpe,  
It should make every wight to dull,  
To heare his glee, and of his strokes full.

"Ne jombre eke no discordaunt thing yfere,  
As thus, to usen tearmes of phisicke,  
In loves tearmes hold of thy matere  
The forme alway, and doe that it be like,  
For if a painter would paint a pike,  
With asses feet, and headed as an ape,  
It cordeth not, so were it but a jape." . . .

[*Fandarus becomes the bearer of the letter, and procures a reply from his niece, whom he rebukes for supposed insensibility.*]

And right as they declared this matere,  
Lo Troilus, right at the stretes end  
Came riding with his tenth somme yfere  
All softely, and thiderward gan bend  
There as they sate, as was his way to wend  
To paleis ward, and Pandare him aspide,  
And said, "Nece, ysee who commeth here ride."

"O flie not in, he seeth us I suppose,  
Least he may thinke that ye him eschue."  
"Nay, nay" (quod she) and woxe as red as rose,  
With that he gan her humbly salue  
With dredeful chere, and oft his hewes mue,  
And up his looke debonairely he cast,  
And becked on Pandare, and forth by past.

God wot if he sat on his horse aright,  
Or goodly was beseene that ilke day,  
God wot where he were like a manly knight,

What should I dretche, or tell of his array :  
Creseide, which that all those thinges sey ;  
To tell in short, her liked all yfere,  
His person, his aray, his looke, his chere.

His goodly manner, and his gentillesse,  
So well, that never sith that she was borne,  
Ne had she suche routh of his distresse,  
And how so, she hath hard ben here beforne,  
To God hope I, she hath now caught a thorn,  
She shall nat pull it out this next wike,  
God send her mo such thornes on to pike.

Pandare, which that stood her faste by,  
Felt iron hot, aud he began to smite,  
And said, " Nece, I pray you heartely,  
Tell me that I shall asken you alite,  
A woman that were of his death to wite  
Withouten his gilt, but for her lack of routh,  
Were it well done?" (quod she) "Nay by my  
trouth."

"God help me so" (quod he) "ye say me sooth,  
Ye feelen well your selfe that I nought lie,  
Lo, yonde he rideth:" (quod she) "Ye so he  
dooth:"

"Well" (quod Pandare) "as I have told you thrie,  
Let be your nice shame, and your follie,  
And speake with him in easing of his herte,  
Let nicete nat do you bothe smert."

But thereon was to heaven and to done,  
Considering all thing, it may nat be,  
And why? for shame, and it were eke too soone,  
To graunten him so great a liberte :

For plainly her entent, as (said she)  
Was for to love him unwist, if she might,  
And guerdon him with nothing but with sight.

But Pandare thought, it shall nat be so,  
If that I may, this nice opinion  
Shall nat ben holden fully yeares two.  
What should I make of this a long sermon?  
He must assent on that conclusion,  
As for the time, and whan that it was eve,  
And all was well, he rose and tooke his leve.

And on his way fast homeward he spedde,  
And right for joy he felt his herte daunce,  
And Troilus he found alone abedde,  
That lay, as done these lovers in a traunce,  
Betwixen hope and derke desperaunce,  
But Pandare, right at his incomming,  
He song, as who saith, "Lo, somewhat I bring."

And said, "Who is in his bedde so soone  
Yburied thus?" "It am I friend:" (quod he)  
"Who, Troilus? nay, help me so the Moone"  
(Quod Pandarus) "thou shalt up rise and see  
A charme that was sent right now to thee,  
The which can healen thee of thine accesse,  
If thou do forthwith all thy businesse."

"Ye, through the might of God:" (quod Troilus)  
And Pandarus gan him the letter take,  
And said, "Parde God hath holpen us,  
Have here a light, and look on all these blake."  
But often gan the herte glad and quake  
Of Troilus, while he it gan to rede,  
So as the wordes yave him hope or drede.



But finally he tooke all for the best  
That she him wrote, for somewhat he beheld,  
On which he thought he might his herte rest,  
All covered she the wordes under sheld,  
Thus to the more worthy part he held,  
That what for hope, and Pandarus behest,  
His greate wo foryede he at the lest.

*[Pandarus by stratagem brings Troilus to speech with his lady ; and the lover pleads so well that a degree of love is granted him. The mediator finds recompense in the happiness of his friend, in his gratitude and patient hearing of good counsel.]*

Thus held hem ech of other well apaied,  
That all the world ne might it bet amend,  
And on the morrow when they were araied,  
Ech to his owne needs gan to entend :  
But Troilus, though as the fire he brend,  
For sharpe desire of hope, and of pleasaunce,  
He not forgate his good governaunce.

But in himself, with manhood gan restrain  
Ech rakell deed, and ech unbridled chere,  
That all that liven soothe for to saine,  
Ne should have wist by word or by manere  
What that he ment, as touching this matere,  
From every wight, as ferre as is the cloud,  
He was so wise, and well dissimulen coud.

And all the while which that I now devise,  
This was his life, with all his full might :  
By dav he was in Martes high servise,

That is to saine, in armes as a knight,  
And for the more part all the long night,  
He lay and thought how that he might serve  
His lady best, her thanke for to deserve,

N'll I not sweare, although he lay soft,  
That in his thought n'as somewhat diseased,  
Ne that he tourned on his pillowes oft,  
And would of that him missed have ben eased,  
But in such case men be nat alway pleased,  
For naught I wote, no more than was he,  
That can I deeme of possibilitie.

But certaine is, to purpose for to go,  
That in this while, as writen is in geste,  
He saw his lady sometime, and also  
She with him spake, whan that she durst and leste,  
And by hir both avise, as was the best,  
Appointeden full warely in this need,  
So as they durst, how they would proceed,

But it was spoken in so short a wise,  
In such awaite alway, and in such feare,  
Least any wight divinen or devise  
Would of hem two, or to it lay an eare,  
That all this world so lefe to hem ne were,  
As that Cupide would hem his grace send,  
To maken of her speech right an end.

But thilke little that they spake or wrought,  
His wise ghost tooke aye of all such hede,  
It seemed her he wiste what she thought,  
Withouten word, so that it was no nede,  
To bid him aught to doen, or aught forbede,  
For which she thought that love, all come it late  
Of all joy had opened her the yate.

And shortly of this processe for to pace,  
So well his werke and wordes he beset,  
That he so full stood in his ladies grace,  
That twenty thousand times ere she let,  
She thonked God she ever with him met,  
So could he him governe in such servise.  
That all the world ne might it bet devise.

For she found him so discreet in all,  
So secret, and of such obeisaunce,  
That well she felt he was to her a wall  
Of steel, and shield of every displeasaunce,  
That to been in his good governaunce,  
So wise he was, she was no more asered,  
I meane as ferre as aught ben required. . . .

But to the great effect, then say I thus,  
That stonden in concord and in quiete  
This ilke two, Creseide and Troilus,  
As I have told, and in this time swete,  
Save onely often might they not mete,  
Ne leisure have, hir speeches to fulfell,  
That it befell right as I shall you tell,

That Pandarus, that ever did his might,  
Right for the fine that I shall speake of here,  
As for to bringen to his house some night  
His faire nece, and Troilus yfere,  
Where as at leiser all this high matere  
Touching hir love were at the full up bound,  
Had out of doubt a time to it found. . . .

*[Pandarus resolves to bring the lovers secretly together at his house.]*

Now is there litell more for to done,  
But Pandare up, and shortly for to saine,  
Right sone upon the chaunging of the Mone.  
Whan lightlesse is the world a night or twaine,  
And that the welkin shope him for to raine,  
He streight a morrow unto his nece went,  
Ye have well herde the fine of his entent.

Whan he was comen, he gan anon to play,  
As he was wont, and of himselfe to jape,  
And finally he swore, and gan her say,  
By this and that, she should him not escape,  
No lenger done him after her to gape :  
But certainly, she must, by her leve,  
Come soupen in his house with him at eve.

At which she lough, and gan her first excuse,  
And said : " It raineth : lo, how should I gone,"  
" Let be," (quod he) " ne stonde not thus to muse,  
This mote be don, ye shal come there anone,"  
So at the last, hereof they fell at one :  
Or eles fast he swore her in her eere,  
He nolde never comen there she were.

Sone after this, she to him gan rowne,  
And asked him if Troilus were there,  
He swore her nay, for he was out of towne :  
And said, " Nece, I suppose that he were there,  
You durst never thereof have the more fere ?  
For rather than men might him there asprie,  
Me were lever a thousand folde to die."

Naught list mine auctour fully to declare,  
What that she thought, whan as he said so,  
That Troilus was out of towne yfare,

And if he said thereof soth or no,  
But that withouten awaite with him to go,  
She graunted him, sith he her that besought,  
And as his nece obeyed as her ought.

But nathelesse, yet gan she him besech,  
(Although with him to gone it was no fere)  
For to beware of gofisshe peoples spech,  
That dremen thinges, which that never were,  
And wel avise him whom he brought there :  
And said him, " Eme, sens I must on you trist,  
Loke al be wel, and do now as you list."

He swore her this by stockes and by stones,  
And by the Goddes that in Heven dwell,  
Or eles were him lever soule and bones,  
With Pluto king, as depe ben in Hell  
As Tantalus : what should I more tell?  
When al was well, he rose and toke his leve,  
And she to souper came whan it was eve.

With a certaine number of her own men,  
And with her faire nece Antigone,  
And other of her women nine or ten,  
But who was glad now, who, as trowe yee?  
But Troilus, that stode and might it see  
Throughout a litel window in a stewe,  
Ther he beshet, sith midnight, was in mewe,

Unwist of every wight, but of Pandare.  
But to the point, now whan that she was come,  
With al joy, and al her frendes in fare,  
Here eme anon in armes hath her nome,  
And than to the souper al and some,  
Whan as time was, full softe they hem set,  
God wot there was no deinte ferre to fet.

And after souper gonnen they to rise,  
At ease well, with herte full fresh and glade,  
And wel was him that coude best devise  
To liken her, or that her laughen made,  
He songe, she plaide, he told a tale of Wade :  
But at the last, as every thing hath end,  
She toke her leave, and nedes would thence wend.

But O Fortune, executrice af wierdes,  
O influences of these hevens hie,  
Soth is, that under God ye ben our hierdes,  
Though to us beestes ben the causes wrie ;  
This mene I now, for she gan homeward hie ;  
But execute was all beside hir leve,  
At the goddes wil, for which she must bleve.

The bente Mone with her hornes all pale,  
Saturnus and Jove, in Cancro joyned were,  
That such a raine from Heven gan availe,  
That every maner woman that was there,  
Had of that smoky raine a very feere ;  
At which Pandare tho lough, and said thenne,  
" Now were it time a lady to go henne.

" But good nece, if I might ever please  
You any thing, than pray I you," (quod he)  
" To don mine herte as now so great an ease,  
As for to dwell here al this night with me,  
For why ? this is your owne house parde :  
For by my trouth, I say it nat in game,  
To wende as now, it were to me a shame."

Creseide, which that could as much good  
As halfe a world, toke hede of his praire,  
And sens it rained, and al was in a flode,

She thought, "As good chepe may I dwel here  
And graunt it gladly with a frendes chere,  
And have a thonk, as grutch and than abide,  
For home to go it may nat well betide."

"I wol," (quod she) "mine uncle liefte and dere,  
Sens that you list, it skill is to be so,  
I am right glad with you to dwellen here,  
I said but agame that I would go."  
"Ywis graunt mercy nece," (quod he) "tho :  
Were it agame or no, sothe to tell,  
Now am I glad, sens that you list to dwel."

Thus al is wel, but tho began aright  
The newe joy, and al the fest againe,  
But Pandarus, if goodly had he might,  
He would have hied her to bedde full faine,  
And said, "O Lord, this is an huge raine,  
This were a wether for to sleepen in,  
And that I rede us soone to begin.

"And nece, wote ye where I woll you lay,  
For what we shul not liggen ferre a sonder,  
And for ye neither shullen, dare I say,  
Here noise of raine, ne yet of thonder?  
By God right in my closet yonder,  
And I wol in that utter house alone,  
Ben wardain of your women everichone.

"And in this middle chambre that ye se,  
Shal your women slepen, wel and soft,  
And there I said, shal your selven be :  
And if ye liggen wel to night, come oft,  
And careth not what wether is aloft.  
The wine anone, and whan so you lest,  
Go we to slepe, I trowe it be the best."

There n'is no more, but hereafter sone  
They voide, dronke, and travers draw anone,  
Gan every wight that hath nought to done  
More in the place, out of the chambre gone,  
And ever more so stereliche it rone,  
And blewe therwith so wonderliche loude,  
That wel nigh no man heren other coude.

Tho Pandarus her eme, right as him ought  
With women, such as were her most about,  
Ful glad unto her beddes side her brought,  
And toke his leave, and gan ful lowe lout,  
And said, "Here is this closet dore without,  
Right overtwhart, your women ligger all,  
That whom ye list of hem, ye may sone call."

Lo, whan that she was in the closet laid,  
And al her women forth by ordinaunce,  
A bedde weren, there as I have said,  
There n'as no more to skippen nor to prounce,  
But boden go to bedde with mischaunce,  
If any wight stering were any where,  
And lett hem slepen, that abedde were. . . .

Tho Troilus gan sorrowfully to sike  
Lest she be wroth, him thought his herte deide,  
And saied, "Alas, upon my sorrowes sike,  
Have mercy, O swete herte mine Creseide :  
And if that in tho wordes that I seide,  
Be any wrong, I woll no more trespass,  
Doeth what you list, I am all in your grace."

And she answerde, "Of gilt misericorde,  
That is to saine, that I foryeve all this,  
And evermore on this night you recorde,  
And bethe well ware ye do no more amis :"



"Nay, dere herte mine, no more" (quod he) "ywis."  
"And now" (quod she) "that I have you do smart,  
Foryeve it to me, mine own swete herte."

This Troilus with blisse of that surprised,  
Put all in Goddes hand, as he that ment  
Nothing but well, and sodainly avised  
He her in his armes fast to him hent :  
And Pandarus, with a full good entent,  
Laied him to slepe, and saied, "If ye be wise,  
Sweveneth not now, lest more folk arise."

What might or may the sely larke say,  
Whan that the sparhauke hath him in his fote,  
I can no more, but of these ilke tway,  
(To whom this tale sugre be or sote)  
Though I tary a yeere, sometime I mote,  
After mine aucthour tellen hir gladnesse,  
As well as I have told hir hevinesse.

Creseide, which that felt her thus ytake,  
(As writen clerkes in hir bokes old)  
Right as an aspen lefe she gan to quake,  
Whan she him felt her in his armes fold :  
But Troilus all hole of cares cold,  
Gan thanken tho the blisfull goddes seven,  
Through sondry pains to bring folk to Heven.

This Troilus in armes gan her straine,  
And saied "Swete, as ever mote I gone,  
Now be ye caught, here is but we twaine,  
Now yeldeth you, for other boote is none :"  
To that Creseide answerde thus anone,  
"Ne had I er now, my sweet herte dere,  
Been yolde ywis, I were not here."

O soth is saied, that healed for to be  
As of a fever, or other great sicknesse,  
Men must drinke as we often se,  
Full bitter drinke : and for to have gladnesse  
Men drinke of pain, and great distresse :  
I meane it here by, as for this aventure,  
That through a pain hath founden al his cure.

And now swetnesse semeth far more swete,  
That bitternesse assaied was biforne,  
For out of wo in blisse now they flete,  
Non soch they felten sens they were borne,  
Now is this bet, than both two be lorne :  
For love of God, take every woman hede,  
To werken thus, if it come to the nede.

Creseide all quite from every drede and tene,  
As she that just cause had him to trist,  
Made him soche feast, it joy was to sene,  
Whan she his trouth and clene entent wist :  
And as about a tree with many a twist  
Bitrent and writhe the swete wodbinde,  
Can eche of hem in armes other winde.

And as the newe abashed nightingale,  
That stinteth first, whan she beginneth sing,  
Whan that she heareth any heerdes tale,  
Or in the hedges any wight steiring,  
And after siker doeth her voice outring :  
Right so Creseide, whan that her drede stent,  
Opened her herte, and told him her entent.

And right as he that seeth his death yshapen,  
And dien mote, in aught that he may gesse,  
And sodainly rescuous doeth hem escapen,  
And from his death is brought in sikernesse :

For all this world, in soche present gladnesse,  
Was Troilus, and hath his lady swete :  
With worse hap God let us never mete. . . .

These ilke two that ben in armes laft,  
So lothe to hem a sonder gon it were,  
That eche from other wenden been biraft,  
Or eles lo, this was her moste fere,  
That all this thing but nice dreames were,  
For which full oft eche of hem saied, "O swete,  
Clepe I you thus, or els doe I it mete."

And lord so he gan goodly on her se,  
That never his loke ne blent fram her face,  
And saied, "O my dere herte, may it be  
That it be soth, that ye beene in this place?"  
"Ye herte mine, God thanke I of his grace."  
(Quod tho Creseide) and therwithall him kist,  
That where her spirite was, for joy she n'ist.

This Troilus full often her eyen two  
Gan for to kisse, and saied : "O eyen clere,  
It weren ye that wrought me soche wo,  
Ye humble nettes of my lady dere :  
Tho there be mercy written in your chere,  
God wote the text full harde is for to find,  
How coud ye withouten bonde me bind?"

Therwith he gan her fast in armes take,  
And well an hundred times gan he sike,  
Not such sorrowfull sighes as men make  
For wo, or eles whan that folke be sike :  
But easie sighes, soche as been to like,  
That shewed his affection within,  
Of soche maner sighes could he not blin. . . .

Retourned to his roiall paleis sone,  
He soft unto his bedde gan for to sinke  
To slepe long, as he was wont to doen,  
But all for naught, he may well ligge and winke,  
But slepe may there none in his herte sinke,  
Thinking how she, for whom desire him brend,  
A thousand folde was worth more than he wend.

And in his thought, gan up and down to wind  
Her wordes all, and every countenaunce,  
And fermely impressen in his mind  
The lest pointe that to him was pleasaunce,  
And verely of thilke remembraunce,  
Desire al newe him brende, and lust to brede,  
Gan more than erst, and yet toke he none hede.

Creseide also, right in the same wise,  
Of Troilus gan in her herte shet  
His worthinesse, his lust, his dedes wise,  
His gentillesse, and how she with him met;  
Thonking love, he so well her beset,  
Desiring oft to have her herte dere,  
In soche a place as she durst make him chere. . .

[*They meet again and again in the same manner.*]

But nedes day departe hem must sone,  
And whan hir speech done was, and hir chere,  
They twin anon, as they were wont to done,  
And setten time of meting eft yfere:  
And many a night they wrought in this manere,  
And thus fortune a time ladde in joie  
Creseide, and eke this kinges son of Troie.

In suffisaunce, in bliss, and in singings,  
This Troilus gan all his life to lede,  
He spendeth, justeth, and maketh feestings,  
He geveth freely oft, and chaungeth wede,  
He helde about him alway out of drede  
A world of folke, as come him well of kind,  
The freshest and the best he coulde find.

That such a voice was of him, and a steven,  
Throughout the world, of honour and largesse,  
That it up ronge unto the yate of Heven,  
And as in love he was in such gladnesse,  
That in his herte he demed, as I gesse,  
That there n'is lover in this world at ease,  
So wel as he, and thus gan love him please.

The goodlihede or beaute, which the kind,  
In any other lady had ysette,  
Can not the mountenaunce of a gnat unbind,  
About his herte, of all Creseides nette :  
He was so narrow ymasked, and yknette,  
That is undon in any maner side,  
That n'il nat ben, for ought that may betide.

And by the hond full ofte he would take  
This Pandarus, and into gardin lede,  
And such a feest, and such a processe make  
Him of Creseide, and of her womanhede,  
And of her beaute, that withouten drede,  
It was an Heven his wordes for to here,  
And than he woulde sing in this manere :

“ Love, that of erth and sea hath governaunce,  
Love, that his heestes hath in Heven hie,  
Love, that with an holosome aliaunce,  
Hialte people joyned, as him list hem gie,

Love, that knitteth law and companie,  
And couples doth in vertue for to dwell,  
Binde this accord, that I have told and tell.

"That, that the world with faith, which that is  
stable,

Diverseth so his staundes according,  
That elements that bethe discordable,  
Holden a bonde, perpetually during,  
That Phebus mote his rosy day forth bring,  
And that the Mone hath lordship over the nights,  
Al this doeth Love, aie heried be his might.

"That, that the sea, that greedy is to flowen,  
Constraineth to a certaine ende so  
His floodes, that so fiercely they ne growen  
To drenchen earth and all for evermo,  
And if that Love aught let his bridle go,  
And all that now loveth asunder should lepe,  
And lost were all, that Love halt now to hepe.

"So would to God, that authour is of kind,  
That with his bond, Love of his vertue list  
To searchen hertes all, and fast bind,  
That from his bond no wight the wey out wist,  
And hertes cold, hem would I that hem twist,  
To maken hem love, and that list hem aie rew  
On hertes sore, and keep hem that ben trew."

In all needes for the townes werre  
He was, and aye the first in armes dight,  
And certainly, but if that bookes erre,  
Save Hector, most ydradde of any wight,  
And this encrease of hardinesse and might  
Come him of love, his ladies thanke to win,  
That altered his spirit so within.

In time of truce on hauking would he ride,  
Or els hunt bore, beare, or lioun,  
The small beastes let he gon beside,  
And whan that he come riding into the toun,  
Full oft his lady from her window down,  
As fresh as faucon, comen out of mue,  
Full redely was him goodly to salue.

And most of love and vertue was his speech,  
And in dispite had all wretchednesse,  
And doubtlesse no need was him beseech  
To honouren hem that had worthinesse,  
And easen hem that weren in distresse,  
And glad was he, if any wight well ferde  
That lover was, whan he it wist or herde.

For sooth to saine, he lost held every wight,  
But if he were in Loves high servise,  
I meane folke that aught it ben of right,  
And over all this, so well could he devise  
Of sentement, and in so uncouth wise  
All his array, that every lover thought,  
That al was wel, what so he said or wrought.

And though that he be come of blood roiall,  
Him list of pride at no wight for to chace,  
Benigne he was to ech in generall,  
For which he gate him thank in every place :  
Thus wolde Love, yheried by his grace,  
That pride, and ire, envie, and avarice,  
He gan to flie, and every other vice. . . .

[*Antenor is taken by the Greeks in battle; and Calcas  
legs in the council that the prisoner may be ex-  
changed for Creseide. This is granted, and envoys  
come into the Trojan parliament to arrange the  
transfer.*]

This Troilus was present in the place,  
When asked was for Antenor Creseide,  
For which full sone chaungen gan his face,  
As he that with tho wordes well nigh deide,  
But nathelesse he no word to it seide,  
Lest men should his affection espie,  
With mannes herte he gan his sorowes drie.

And full of anguish and of gresly drede,  
Abode what other lords would to it sey,  
And if they would graunt, as God forbede,  
Th'eschange of her, than thought he thinges twey:  
First, how to save her honour, and what wey  
He might best th'eschaunge of her withstond,  
Full fast he cast how all this might stond.

Love him made all prest to done her bide,  
And rather dien than she should go,  
But Reason said him on that other side,  
"Withouten assent of her do nat so,  
Lest for thy werke she would be thy fo,  
And saine, that through thy medling is yblow  
Your brother love, there it was not erst know."

For which he gan deliberen for the best,  
And though the lordes would that she went,  
He would let hem graunt what hem lest,  
And tell his lady first what that they ment,  
And whan that she had said him her entent,  
Thereafter would he worken also blive,  
Tho all the world ayen it wolde strive.

Hector, which that well the Greekes herd,  
For Antenor how they would have Creseide,  
Gan it withstond, and soberly answered:  
"Sirs, she n'is no prisoner," (he seide)



"I n'ot on you who that this charge leide,  
But on my part, ye may eftsoones hem tell,  
We usen here no women for to sell."

The noise of people up stert than atones,  
As brimme as blase of straw yset on fire,  
For infortune it would for the nones,  
They shoulde hir confusion desire :  
"Hector," (quod they) "what ghost may you  
    enspire  
This woman thus to shild, and done us lese  
Dan Antenore, a wrong way now ye chese.

"That is so wise, and eke so bold baroun,  
And we have need of folke, as men may see,  
He is one of the greatest of this toun :  
O Hector, lette, thy fantasies bee,  
O king Priam," (quod they) "thus segge wee,  
That all our voice is to forgone Creseide,"  
And to deliver Antenor they preide.

O Juvenall lord, true is thy sentence,  
That little wenen folke what is to yerne,  
That they ne finden in hir desire offence,  
For cloud of errour ne lette hem discerne  
What best is, and lo, here ensample as yerne :  
These folke desiren now deliverance  
Of Antenor, that brought hem to mischaunce.

For he was after traitour to the toun  
Of Troy alas, they quitte him out to rathe,  
O nice world, so thy discretioun,  
Creseide, which that never did hem scathe,  
Shall now no lenger in her blisse bathe,  
But Antenor, he shall come home to toun,  
And she shall out, thus said heere and houn.

For which delibered was by parliment,  
For Antenor to yeelden out Creseide,  
And it pronounced by the president,  
Though that Hector nay full oft praid,  
And finally, what wight that it withsaid,  
It was for naught, it must ben, and should,  
For substaunce of the parliment it would.

Departed out of the parliment echone,  
This Troilus, without wordes mo,  
Unto his chamber spedde him fast alone,  
But if it were a man of his or two,  
The which he bad out faste for to go,  
Because he would slepen, as he said,  
And hastely upon his bedde him laid.

And as in winter, leaves ben biraft  
Ech after other, till trees be bare,  
So that there n'is but barke and branch ylast,  
Lithe Troilus, biraft of ech welfare,  
Ybounden in the blacke barke of care,  
Disposed wode out of his witte to breide,  
So sore him sate the chaunging of Creseide.

He rist him up, and every dore he shette,  
And window eke, and tho this sorrowfull man  
Upon his beddes side doune him sette,  
Full like a dead image, pale and wan,  
And in his breast the heaped wo began  
Out brust, and he to worken in this wise  
In his woodnesse, as I shall you devise. . . .

"O wery ghost, that errest to and fro,  
Why nilt thou flien out of the wofullest  
Body, that ever might on grounde go?  
O soule, lurking in this wofull neste,

Fly forthout mine herte, and let it breste,  
And follow alway Creseide thy lady dere,  
Thy right place is now no lenger here.

“O wofull eien two, sens your disport  
Was all to seene Creseides eyen bright,  
What shall ye done, but for my discomfort  
Stoden for naught, and wepen out your sight,  
Sens she is quaint, that wont was you to light,  
In veine from this forth have I eyen twey  
Yformed, sens your vertue is away.

“O my Creseide, O lady souveraine  
Of this wofull soule that thus crieth,  
Who shall now yeven comfort to thy paine?  
Alas, no wight, but whan mine herte dieth,  
My spirit, which that so unto you hieth,  
Receive in gree, for that shall aye you serve,  
Forthy no force is, though the body sterve. . . .

A thousand sighes hotter than the glede,  
Out of his breast, each after other went,  
Medled with plaint new, his wo to fede,  
For which his wofull teares never stent,  
And shortly so his sorowes him to rent,  
And woxe so mate, that joy or pennaunce  
He feeleth none, but lieth in a traunce.

Pandare, which that in the parliment  
Had heard what every lord and burgess seid,  
And how full graunted was by one assent,  
For Antenor to yelden out Creseid:  
Gan well nigh wood out of his wit to breid,  
So that for wo he niste what he ment,  
But in a rage to Troilus he went.

A certaine knight, that for the time kept  
The chamber dore, undid it him anone,  
And Pandare, that full tenderly wept,  
Into the derke chamber as still as stone,  
Toward the bedde gan softly to gone,  
So confuse, that he n'ist what to say,  
For very wo, his wit was nigh away.

And with chere and looking all to torne,  
For sorow of this, and with his armes folden,  
He stood this wofull Troilus beforne,  
And on his pitous face he gan beholden,  
But so oft gan his herte colden,  
Seeing his friend in wo, whose heavinesse  
His herte slough, as thought him for distresse.

This wofull wight, this Troilus that felt  
His friend Pandare ycomen him to see,  
Gan as the snow ayenst the Sunne melt,  
For which this wofull Pandare of pite  
Gan for to weepe as tenderly as he:  
And speechlesse thus ben these ilke twey,  
That neither might for sorow o word sey.

But at the last, this wofull Troilus,  
Nigh dead for smert, gan bresten out to rore,  
And with a sorrowfull noise he said thus  
Among his sobbes and his sighes sore,  
"Lo, Pandare I am dead withouten more,  
Hast thou not heard at parliament," he seide,  
"For Antenor how lost is my Creseide?"

This Pandare full dead and pale of hew,  
Full pitously answerde, and said, "Yes,  
As wisely were it false as it is trew,  
That I have heard, and wote all how it is,

O mercy God, who would have trowed this,  
Who would have wend, that in so little a throw  
Fortune our joy would have overthrow.

“ For in this world there is no creature,  
As to my dome, that ever saw ruine  
Straunger than this, through case or aventure,  
But who may all eschue or all devine,  
Such is this world, forthy I thus define :  
Ne trust no wight to find in Fortune  
Aye property, her yestes ben commune.

“ But tell me this, why thou art now so mad  
To sorrowen thus, why list thou in this wise,  
Sens thy desire all holy hast thou had,  
So that by right it ought inough suffise,  
But I that never felt in my servise  
A friendly chere or looking of an eie,  
Let me thus wepe and wailen till I die.

“ And over al this, as thou wel wost thy selve,  
This toun is full of ladies all about,  
And to my dome, fairer than such twelve  
As ever she was, shal I finden in some rout,  
Ye one or twey, withouten any dout :  
Forthy be glade mine owne dere brother,  
If she be lost, we shall recover another.

“ What God forbid alway that ech pleasaunce  
In o thing were, and in none other wight,  
If one can sing, another can well daunce,  
If this be goodly, she is glad and light,  
And this is faire, and that can good aright,  
Ech for his vertue holden is for dere,  
Both heroner and faucon for riverse.

“ And eke as writ Zansis, that was full wise,  
The new love out chaseth oft the old :  
And upon new case lieth new avise,  
Thinke eke thy selfe to saven art thou hold.  
Such fire by processe shall of kind cold,  
For sens it is but casuell pleasaunce,  
Some case shall put it out of remembraunce.

“ For also sure as day commeth after night,  
The newe love, labour or other wo,  
Or eles selde seeing of a wight,  
Done old affections all overgo,  
And for thy part, thou shalt have one of the  
To abredg with thy bitter paines smart,  
Absence of her shall drive her out of herte.”

These wordes saied he for the nones all  
To helpe his friend, least he for sorow deide,  
For doubtlesse to doen his wo to fall,  
He raught nat what unthrift that he seide :  
But Troilus that nigh for sorrow deide,  
Tooke little hede of all that ever he ment,  
One care it heard, at the other out it went.

But at the last he answerd, and said, Friend,  
This lechcraft, or healed thus to be,  
Were well fitting, if that I were a fiend,  
To traien a wight, that true is unto me,  
I pray God let this counsaile never ythe,  
But doe me rather sterve anon right here,  
Ere this I doen, as thou me wouldest lere.

“ She that I serve ywis, what so thou sey,  
To whom mine herte enhabite is by right,  
Shall have me holy hers, till that I dey,  
For Pandarus, sens I have trouth her hight,

I woll nat ben untrue for no wight,  
But as her man I woll aye live and sterve,  
And never none other creature serve.

“ And there thou saiest thou shalt as fair find  
As she, let be, make no comparison,  
To creature yformed here by kind,  
O leve Pandare, in conclusion,  
I woll nat been of thine opinion  
Touching all this, for which I thee beseech,  
So hold thy peace, thou sleest me with thy speech.

“ Thou biddest me I should love another  
All freshly new, and let Creseide go,  
It lithe nat in my power, leve brother,  
And though I might, yet would I nat do so,  
But canst thou plaien raket to and fro,  
Nettle in dock out, now this, now that, Pandare?  
Now foule fall her for thy wo that care.

“ Thou farest eke by me, Pandarus,  
As he, that whan a wight is wo bigon,  
He commeth to him apace, and saith right thus,  
‘ Thinke not on smart, and thou shalt feele none,’  
Thou maigest me first transmewen in a stone,  
And reve me my passions all,  
Or thou so lightly doe my wo to fall. . . .

[*And while Pandarus is comforting his friend and promising him a meeting with his lady, at which some plan of escape may be arranged, Creseide has heard of the proposed exchange, and is in great distress.*]

But as men seene in toune, and all about,  
That women usen hir friends to visite,  
So to Creseide of women came a rout,  
For pitous joy, and wenden her delite,  
And with hir tales dere ynough a mite,  
These women, which that in the citie dwell,  
They set hem doune, and sayd as I shall tell.

(Quod, first that one) "I am glad truly,  
Because of you, that shall your father see,"  
Another sayd, "Ywis, so am not I,  
For all too little hath she with us be :"  
(Quod tho the third) "I hope ywis that she  
Shall bringen us the peace on every side,  
That whan she goth, almighty God her gide."

Tho wordes and tho womannish thinges  
She herd hem right as thogh she thence were :  
For God it wote, her herte on other thing is,  
Although the body sat among hem there,  
Her advertence is alway els where,  
For Troilus full fast her soule sought,  
Withouten word, on him alway she thought.

These women that thus wenden her to please,  
About naught gan all hir tales spend,  
Such vanitie ne can done her none ease,  
As she that all this meane while brend  
Of other passion than they wend,  
So that she felt almost her herte die  
For wo, and werie of that companie.

For which might she no lenger restraine  
Her teares, they gan so up to well,  
That gave signes of her bitter paine,  
In which her spirit was, and must dwell,



Whether shall I say to you welcome or no?  
That alderfirst me brought unto servise  
Of love alas, that endeth in such wise.

"Endeth than love in wo? Ye or men lieth,  
And all worldly blisse, as thinketh me,  
The end of blisse aye sorrow it occupieth,  
And who troweth not that it so be,  
Let him upon me wofull wretche see,  
That my selfe hate, and aye my birth curse,  
Feeling alway, fro wicke I go to worse.

"Who so me seeth, he seeth sorow all atonis,  
Paine, tourment, plaint, wo and distresse,  
Out of my wofull body harme there none is,  
As langour, anguish, cruell bitterness,  
Annoy, smart, drede, furie, and eke sicknesse,  
I trow ywis from Heaven teares raine,  
For pitie of my aspre and cruell paine."

"And thou my suster, full of discomfort,"  
(Quod Pandarus) "what thinkest thou to do?  
Why ne hast thou to thy selven some resport?  
Why wilt thou thus thy selfe alas fordo?  
Leave all this werke, and take now heed to  
That I shall saine, and herken of good entent  
This message, that by me Troilus you sent."

Turned her tho Creseide a wo making,  
So great, that it a death was for to see,  
"Alas," (quod she) "what wordes may ye bring,  
What woll my dere herte saine to mee,  
Which that I drede nevermore to see,  
Woll he have plaint or teares ere I wend?  
I have ynough, if he thereafter send."

She was right such to seene in her visage,  
As is that wight that men on beare bind,  
Her face like of Paradis the image,  
Was all ychaunged in another kind,  
The play, the laughter men were wont to find  
On hir, and eke her joyes everichone  
Ben fled, and thus lieth Creseide alone.

About her eyen two, a purple ring  
Bitrent, in soothfast tokening of her paine,  
That to behold it was a deadly thing,  
For which Pandare might nat restraine  
The teares from his eyen for to raine,  
But nathelesse as he best might he seide  
From Troilus these wordes to Creseide.

“Lo, nece, I trow ye han heard all how  
The king with other lordes for the best,  
Hath made eschaunge of Antenor and you,  
That cause is of this sorow and this unrest,  
But how this case doth Troilus molest,  
This may none yearthly mannes tongue say,  
For very wo, his wit is all away.

“For which we have so sorowed, he and I,  
That into little it had us both slawe,  
But through my counsaile this day finally,  
He somewhat is fro weeping withdrawe,  
And seemeth me that he desireth fawe  
With you to ben all night for to devise  
Remedie of this, if there were any wise.

“This short and plain, theeffect of my message,  
As ferforth as my wit can comprehend,  
For ye that ben of tourment in such rage,  
May to no long prologue as now entend.

And hereupon ye may answer him send,  
And for the love of God my nece dere,  
So leave this wo, or Troilus be here."

"Great is my wo," (quod she) and sighed sore,  
As she that feeleth deadly sharpe distresse,  
"But yet to me his sorrow is mokell more,  
That love him bet than he himselfe I gesse,  
Alas, for me hath he such hevinesse,  
Can he for me so pitously complaine,  
Ywis this sorow doubleth all my paine.

"Grevous to me God wot is for to twin,"  
(Quod she) "but yet it harder is to me,  
To seene that sorrow which that he is in,  
For well wot I, it woll my bane be,  
And die I woll in certaine tho" (quod she :)  
"But bid him come, er deth that thus me threteth,  
Drive out the ghost which in mine herte beteth."

These wordes said, she on her armes two  
Fell gruffe, and gan to weepen pitously :  
(Quod Pandarus) "Alas, why doe ye so?  
Sens ye well wote the time is fast by  
That he shall come, arise up hastely,  
That he you nat biwopen thus ne find,  
But ye woll have him wode out of his mind.

"For wist he that ye farde in this manere,  
He would himselfe slea : and if I wend  
To have this fare, he should not come here,  
For all the good that Priam may dispend :  
For to what fine he would anon pretend,  
That know I well, and forthy yet I sey,  
So leave this sorow, or plainly he woll dey.

"And shapeth you his sorow for to abredge,  
And nat encrease, lefe nece swete,  
Beth rather to him cause of plat than edge,  
And with some wisdome ye his sorrowes bete :  
What helpeth it to weepen full a strete,  
Or though ye both in salt teares dreint ?  
Bet is a time of cure aye than of pleint.

"I meane thus, whan I him hither bring,  
Sens ye be wise, and both of one assent,  
So shapeth how to distourbe your going,  
Or come ayen soone after ye be went,  
Women ben wise, in short avisement,  
And let seene how your wit shall availe,  
And what that I may helpe, it shall not faile."

"Go," (quod Creseide) "and, uncle, truly  
I shall done all my might me to restraine  
From weeping in his sight, and busily  
Him for to glad, I shall done all my paine,  
And in my herte seeken every vaine,  
If to his sore there may ben founden salve,  
It shall nat lacke certaine on mine halve." . . .

Sooth is, that whan they gonne first to mete,  
So gan the paine hir hertes for to twist,  
That neither of hem other mighte grete,  
But hem in armes took, and after kist,  
The lasse wofull of hem bothe nist  
Where that he was, ne might o word outbring,  
As I said erst, for wo and for sobbing.

The wofull teares that they leten fall,  
As bitter weren out of teares kind  
For paine, as is ligne aloes, or gall,  
So bitter teares wept not as I find

The wofull Mirra, through the barke and rind,  
That in this world there n'is so hard an herte,  
That n'olde have rewed on her paines smart.

But whan hir wofull wery ghostes twaine  
Returned ben, there as hem ought to dwell,  
And that somewhat to weken gan the paine  
By length of plaint, and ebben gan the well  
Of hir teares, and the herte unswell,  
With broken voice, al horse for shrigh, Creseid  
To Troilus these ilke wordes seid.

"O Jove, I die, and mercy thee besech,  
Helpe Troilus:" and therewithal her face  
Upon his brest she laid, and lost her spech,  
Her wofull spirite from his proper place  
Right with the worde away in point to pace,  
And thus she lith, with hewes pale and grene,  
That whilom fresh and fairest was to sene. . .

*[Creseide vetoes her lover's proposal to carry her off by force; but promises, with many vows, to escape and return to Troy in ten days' time.]*

And after that they long yplained had,  
And oft ikist, and strait in armes fold,  
The day gan rise, and Troilus him clad,  
And rufully his lady gan behold:  
As he that felt deathes cares cold,  
And to her grace he gan him recommaund,  
Where he was wo, this hold I no demaund.

For mannes hedde imaginen ne can,  
Ne entendement consider, ne tongue tell  
The cruell paines of this sorrowfull man,  
That passen every torment doune in Hell;

For whan he sawe that she ne might dwell,  
Which that his soule out his herte rent,  
Withouten more, out of the chamber he went. . .

Full redy was at prime Diomede,  
Creseide unto the Grekes hoste to lede,  
For sorow of which, she felt her herte blede,  
As she that n'iste what was best to rede :  
And truely, as men in bokes rede,  
Men wiste never woman have the care,  
Ne was so lothe out of a tounne to fare.

This Troilus withouten rede or lore,  
As man that hath his joies eke forlore,  
Was waiting on his lady evermore,  
As she that was sothfast croppe and more,  
Of all his lust or joyes here tofore :  
But Troilus, now farwell all thy joie,  
For shalt thou never seen her eft in Troie.

Soth is, that while he bode in this manere,  
He gan his wo full manly for to hide,  
That well unneth it seen was in his chere,  
But at the yate there she should out ride,  
With certain folke he hoved her to abide,  
So wo bigon, all would he not him plain,  
That on his horse unneth he sate for pain.

For ire he quoke, so gan his herte gnaw,  
Whan Diomede on horse gan him dight,  
And sayd unto himselfe this ilke saw,  
"Alas," (quod he) "thus foule a wretchednesse  
Why suffre I it? Why n'ill I it redresse?  
Were it nat bet at ones for to die,  
Than evermore in langour thus to crie?

“ Why n’ill I make at ones rich and poore,  
To have inough to done er that she go?  
Why n’ill I bring all Troie upon a roore?  
Why n’ill I slaen this Diomedes also?  
Why n’ill I rather with a man or two,  
Steale her away? Why woll I this endure?  
Why n’ill I helpen to mine owne cure?”

But why he n’olde done so fell a deede,  
That shall I sain, and why him list it spare,  
He had in herte alway a maner drede,  
Lest that Creseide, in rumour of this fare,  
Should have ben slain, lo, this was al his care,  
And eles certain, as I sayed yore,  
He had it done withouten wordes more.

Creseide whan she redy was to ride,  
Full sorowfully she sighed, and sayd “ Alas,”  
But forth she mote, for aught that may betide,  
And forth she rideth full sorowfully apaas:  
Ther is no other remedy in this caas:  
What wonder is, though that her sore smart  
Whan she forgoeth her owne swete herte?

This Troilus in gise of curtesie,  
With hauke on hond, and with an huge rout  
Of knightes, rode and did her companie,  
Passing all the valey ferre without,  
And fether would have ridden out of doubt,  
Full faine, and wo was him, to gone so sone,  
But tourne he must, and it was eke to done.

And right with that was Antenor ycome,  
Out of the Grekes hoste, and every wight  
Was of him glad, and sayd he was welcome,  
And Troilus, al nere his herte light,

He pained him, with all his full might  
Him to with hold of weping at least,  
And Antenor he kist, and made feast.

And therewithal he must his leave take,  
And cast his eye upon her pitously,  
And nere he rode, his cause for to make,  
To take her by the honde al soberly :  
And Lorde so she gan wepen tenderly,  
And he full soft and slightly gan her seie,  
“ Now hold your day, and doe me not to deie.”

With that his courser tourned he about,  
With face pale, and unto Diomede  
No worde he spake, ne none of all his rout,  
Of which the sonne of Tideus toke hede,  
As he that kouthe more than the crede,  
In soche a craft, and by the rein her hent,  
And Troilus to Troie homewardes went.

*[Diomede on the journey declares sudden love to Creseide;  
but she hears him indifferently.]*

To Troy is come this wofull Troilus,  
In sorowe aboven all sorowes smert,  
With felon loke, and face dispitous,  
Tho sodainly doune from his hors he stert,  
And through his paleis with swolne herte,  
To chamber he went, of nothing toke he hede  
Ne none to him dare speke o worde for drede.

And there his sorowes that he spared had,  
He yave an issue large, and death he cride,  
And in his throwes, frenetike and mad  
He curseth Juno, Apollo, and eke Cupide,



He curseth Bachus, Ceres, and Cipride,  
His birth, himselfe, his fate, and eke nature,  
And save his ladie, every creature.

To bed he goth, and waileth there and turneth,  
In furie, as doth he Ixion in Hell,  
And in this wise he nigh till day sojourneth,  
But tho began his herte alite unswell,  
Through teares, which that gonnen up to wel,  
And pitiously he cried upon Creseide,  
And to him self right thus he spake and seide.

“Where is mine owne lady lefe and dere?  
Where is her white brest, where is it, where?  
Where been her armes, and her eyen clere  
That yesterday this time with me were?  
Now may I wepe alone many a teare,  
And graspe about I may, but in this place  
Save a pilow, I find naught to embrace.

“How shal I doen? whan shal she come againe?  
I n’ot alas, why let I her to go?  
As would God I had as tho be slain :  
O herte mine Creseide, O swete fo,  
O lady mine, that I love and no mo,  
To whom for ever more mine herte I vowe,  
See how I die, ye n’ill me not rescowe.

“Who seeth you now, my right lodesterre?  
Who sitteth right now in your presence?  
Who can comforten now your hertes werre?  
Now I am gon, whom yeve ye audience?  
Who speaketh for me right now in my absence?  
Alas, no wight, and that is all my care,  
For well wote I, as evill as I ye fare.

“How should I thus ten daies full endure,  
Whan I the firste night have all this tene?  
How shall she eke sorowfull creature,  
For tendernesse, how shall she this sustene,  
Soche wo for me? o pitous, pale, and grene,  
Shall been your freshe womanly face,  
For langour, er ye tourne unto this place.”

And whan he fell in any slombringes,  
Anon begin he shoulde for to grone,  
And dreamen of the dreadfulest thinges  
That might been : as mete he were alone  
In place horrible, making aie his mone,  
Or meten that he was emonges all  
His enemies, and in hir hondes fall.

And therewithall his bodie should start,  
And with the start all sodainly awake,  
And soche a tremour fele about his herte,  
That of the feare his bodie should quake :  
And therewithall he should a noise make,  
And seme as though he should fall depe,  
From high alofe, and than he would wepe,

And rewen on himselfe so pitously,  
That wonder was to here his fantasie.  
An other time he should mightely  
Comfort himselfe, and sain it was folie,  
So causelesse, soche drede for to drie,  
And eft begin his aspre sorowes new,  
That every man might on his paines rew.

Who could tell all, or fully discrive  
His wo, his plaint, his langour, and his pine?  
Nat all the men that han or been on live,  
Thou reader mayst thy self full well devine,

That soche a wo my wit can not define,  
On idell for to write it should I swinke,  
Whan that my wit is werie it to thinke.

On Heaven yet the sterres weren seen  
Although full pale ywoxen was the Mone,  
And whiten gan the orisont shene,  
All eastward, as it was wont to done,  
And Phebus with his rosie carte sone,  
Gan after that to dresse him up to fare,  
Whan Troilus hath sent after Pandare. . . .

*[The good counsellor reproves his friend for weakness, and induces him to come and visit Sarpedon, who entertains them splendidly.]*

But what availeth this to Troilus,  
That for his sorrow, nothing of it rought,  
But ever in one, as herte pitous,  
Full busily Creseide his lady sought :  
On her was ever al that his herte thought,  
Now this, now that, so fast imagining,  
That glad ywis can him no feasting.

These ladies eke, that at this feast been,  
Sens that he saw his lady was away,  
It was his sorow upon hem for to seen,  
Or for to heare on instrumentes play :  
For she that of his herte hath the kay,  
Was absent, lo, this was his fantasie  
That no wight shulde maken melodie.

Nor there nas houre in al the day or night,  
When he was ther as no man might him here,  
That he ne sayd, "O lovesome lady bright,  
How have ye faren sins that ye were there?"

Welcome ywis mine owne lady dere."  
But welaway, all this n'as but a mase,  
Fortune his hove entended bet to glase.

The letters eke, that she of olde time  
Had him ysent, he would alone rede  
An hundred sith, atwixt noone and prime,  
Refiguring her shape, and her womanhede,  
Within his herte, and every worde and dede  
That passed was, and thus he drove to an end,  
The fourth day, and saied he wol wend.

And said, "Leve brother Pandarus,  
Intendest thou that we shall here bleve,  
Til Sarpedon woll forth conveyen us,  
Yet were it fairer that we toke our leve :  
For Goddes love, let us now sone at eve  
Our leave take, and homeward let us turne,  
For trewely I nill nat thus sojourne."

Pandare answerde, "Be we comen hither  
To fetchen fire, and rennen home againe?  
God help me so, I can nat tellen whither  
We might gone, if I shall sothly saine :  
There any wight is of us more saine  
Than Sarpedon, and if we hence hie  
Thus sodainly, I hold it vilanie.

"Whan that we saiden we would bleve  
With him a weke, and now thus sodainly  
The fourth day to take of him our leve,  
He would wondren on it trewely :  
Let us holden forth our purpose fermely,  
And sens that ye behighten him to abide,  
Hold forward now, and after let us ride."

This Pandarus, with all pine and wo  
Made him to dwell, and at the wekes end,  
Of Sarpedon they toke hir leave tho,  
And on hir way they speden hem to wend :  
(Quod Troilus) "Now Lorde me grace send,  
That I may find at mine home comming,  
Creseide comen," and therewith gan he sing.

"Ye haselwode," thought this Pandare,  
And to himselfe ful softly he seide,  
"God wotte refroiden may this hotte fare,  
Er Calcas sende Troilus Creseide :"  
But nathelesse he japed thus and seide,  
And swore ywis, his herte him wel behight,  
She wolde come as sone as ever she might.

Whan they unto the paleis were ycomen,  
Of Troilus, they doun of horse alight,  
And to the chambre hir way have they nomen,  
And unto time that it gan to night,  
They speken of Creseide the lady bright,  
And after this, whan hem bothe lest,  
They spede hem fro the supper unto rest.

On morow as sone as day began to clere,  
This Troilus gan of his slepe to abreide,  
And to Pandarus, his own brother dere,  
"For love of God," full pitously he seide :  
"As go we seene the paleis of Creseide,  
For sens we yet may have no more feest,  
So let us seiue her paleis at the leest."

And therewithall his meine for to blende.  
A cause he sonde in toun for to go,  
And to Creseides house they gan wende,  
But Lorde, this sely Troilus was wo,

Him thought his sorowful herte brast atwo,  
For when he saw her doores sparred all,  
Well nigh for sorow adoun he gan to fall.

Therwith whan he was ware, and gan behold  
How shet was every window of the place,  
As frost him thought his herte gan to cold,  
For which with changed deedly pale face,  
Withouten worde, he forth by gan to pace,  
And as God would, he gan so faste ride,  
That no wight of his countenance aspide.

Than said he thus : "O paleis desolate,  
O house of houses, whilom best yhight,  
O paleis empty and disconsolate,  
O thou lanterne, of which queint is the light,  
O paleis whilom day, that now art night,  
Wel oughtest thou to fall, and I to die,  
Sens she is went, that wont was us to gie.

"O paleis whilom crowne of houses all,  
Enlumined with Sunne of alle blisse,  
O ring, of which the rubie is out fall,  
O cause of wo, that cause hast ben of blisse :  
Yet sens I may no bet, fain would I kisse  
Thy colde doores, durst I for this rout,  
And farewel shrine of which the saint is out."

Therwith he cast on Pandarus his eie,  
With changed face, and pitous to behold,  
And whan he might his time aright aspie,  
Aie as he rode, to Pandarus he told  
His new sorow, and eke his joyes old,  
So pitously, and with so deed an hew,  
That every wight might on his sorow rew.

Fro thence-forth he rideth up and doune,  
And every thing came him to remembraunce,  
As he rode forth by the places of the toune,  
In which he whilom had all his pleasaunce :  
"Lo, yonder saw I mine owne lady daunce,  
And in that temple with her eien clere,  
Me caught first my right lady dere.

"And yonder have I herde full lustely  
My dere herte laugh, and yonder play  
Saw I her ones eke ful blisfully,  
And yonder ones to me gan she say  
'Now good sweete love me well I pray,'  
And yonde so goodly gan she me behold,  
That to the death mine herte is to her hold.

"And at the corner in the yonder house,  
Herde I mine alderlevest lady dere,  
So womanly, with voice melodious,  
Singen so wel, so goodly and so clere,  
That in my soule yet me thinketh I here  
The blisful sowne, and in that yonder place  
My lady first me toke unto her grace." . . .

And after this he to the yates went,  
There as Crescide out rode, a full good paas,  
And up and down there made he many a went,  
And to him selfe ful oft he said, "Alas,  
Fro hence rode my blisse and my solas,  
As would blisful God now for his joie,  
I might her sene ayen come to Troie.

"And to the yonder hil I gan her guide,  
Alas, and there I toke of her my leve,  
And yonde I saw her to her father ride,  
For sorow of which mine herte shal to cleve :

And hither home I come whan it was eve,  
And here I dwell, out cast from all joie,  
And shal, til I may sene her eft in Troie."

And of him selfe imagined he oft,  
To ben defaited, pale, and woxen lesse  
Than he was wont, and that men saiden soft,  
"What may it be? who can the sothe gesse,  
Why Troilus hath al this hevinesse?"  
And al this n'as but his melancholie,  
That he had of him selfe such fantasie.

Another time imagined he would,  
That every wight that went by the wey,  
Had of him routh, and that they saine should,  
"I am right sorry, Troilus wol dey :"  
And thus he drove a day yet forth or twey,  
As ye have herde, such life gan he lede,  
As he that stode betwixen hope and drede.

For which him liked in his songes shewe  
Thenceson of his wo, as he best might,  
And made a songe, of wordes but a few,  
Somwhat his wolfull herte for to light :  
And whan he was from every mannes sight,  
With softe voice, he of his lady dere,  
That absent was, gan sing as ye may here.

"O sterre, of which I lost have all the light,  
With herte sore, wel ought I to bewaile,  
That ever derke in turment, night by night  
Toward my deth, with winde I sterve and saile :  
For which the tenth night, if that I faile,  
The guiding of thy bemes bright an houre,  
My ship and me Caribdes wol devour."



This song whan he thus songen had sone,  
He fell ayen into his sighes old,  
And every night, as was he wont to done,  
He stode the bright Moone to behold :  
And al his sorow he to the Moone told,  
And said, "Ywis whan thou art horned new,  
I shall be glad, if al the world be trew.

"I saw thine hornes old eke by that morow,  
Whan hence rode my right lady dere,  
That cause is of my turment and my sorow,  
For whiche, O bright Lucina the clere,  
For love of God ren fast about thy sphere,  
For whan thine hornes newe ginnen spring,  
Than shall she come that may my blisse bring."

The day is more, and lenger every night  
Than they ben wont to be, him thought tho,  
And that the Sunne went his course unright,  
By lenger way than it was wont to go,  
And said, "Ywis, I drede me evermo  
The Sunnes sonne Pheton be on live,  
And that his fathers cart amisse he drive."

Upon the walles fast eke would he walke,  
And on the Greekes host he would see,  
And to himselfe right thus he would talke :  
"Lo, yonder is mine owne lady free,  
Or else yonder, there the tents bee,  
And thence commeth this aire that is so soote,  
That in my soule I fele it doth me boote.

"And hardily, this wind that more and more  
Thus stoundmeale encreaseth in my face,  
Is of my ladies deepe sighes sore,  
I preve it thus, for in none other space

Of all this toune, save only in this place,  
Feele I no wind, that souneth so like paine,  
It saith, ' Alas, why twined be we twaine.' "

This longe time he driveth forth right thus,  
Till fully passed was the ninthe night,  
And aye beside him was this Pandarus,  
That busily did all his full might  
Him to comfort, and make his herte light,  
Yeving him hope alway the tenth morow,  
That she shal comen, and stinten all his sorow. . . .

*[Diomede meanwhile makes some slight progress in his courtship of Creseide.]*

But in effect, and shortly for to say,  
This Diomede all freshly new againe  
Gan preasen on, and fast her mercy pray,  
And after this, the soothe for to saine,  
Her glove he toke, of which he was full faine,  
And finally, whan it was woxen eve,  
And all was well, he rose and tooke his leve.

The bright Venus folowed and aie taught  
The way there brode Phebus doune alight,  
And Cithera her chare horse over raught,  
To whirle out of the Lion, if she might,  
And Signifer his candles sheweth bright,  
When that Creseide unto her bed went,  
Within her fathers faire bright tent.

Retourning in her soule aye up and doun  
The wordes of this suddaine Diomede,  
His great estate, and perill of the toun,  
And that she was alone, and had nede

Of friendes help, and thus began to brede  
The cause why, the soothe for to tell,  
She tooke fully purpose for to dwell.

The morow came, and ghostly for to speke,  
This Diomede is come unto Creseide,  
And shortly, least that ye my tale breke,  
So well he for himselfe spake and seide,  
That all her sighes sore doun he leide,  
And finally, the soothe for to saine,  
He reft her the great of all her paine.

And after this, the story telleth us,  
That she him yave the faire bay stede,  
The which she ones wan of Troilus,  
And eke a brooch (and that was little nede)  
That Troilus' was, she yave this Diomede,  
And eke the bet from sorow him to releve,  
She made him weare a pencell of her sleve.

I find eke in stories elsewhere,  
Whan through the body hurt was Diomede,  
Of Troilus, tho wept she many a tere,  
Whan that she saw his wide woundes blede,  
And that she tooke to kepen him good hede,  
And for to healen him of his smart,  
Men saine, I n'ot, that she yave him her herte.

But truely the storie telleth us,  
There made never woman more wo  
Than she, whan that she falsed Troilus,  
She said "Alas, for now is clene ago  
My name in trouth of love for evermo,  
For I have falsed one the gentillest  
That ever was, and one the worthiest.

"Alas, of me unto the worldes end  
Shall neither ben ywritten or ysong  
No good worde, for these bokes woll me shend :  
Yrolled shall I been on many a tong,  
Throughout the word my bell shall be rong,  
And women most woll hate me of all,  
Alas, that such a caas me should fall.

"They woll saine, in as much as in me is,  
I have hem done dishonour welaway,  
All be I not the first that did amis,  
What helpeth that, to done my blame away,  
But sens I see there is no better way,  
And that too late is now for me to rue,  
To Diomede I woll algate be true.

"But Troilus, sens I no better may,  
And sens that thus departen ye and I,  
Yet pray I God so yeve you right good day,  
As for the gentillest knight truely  
That ever I saw, to serven faithfully,  
And best can aye his ladies honour kepe,"  
And with that word she brast anon to wepe.

"And certes, you ne haten shall I never,  
And friendes love, that shall ye have of me,  
And my good word, all should I liven ever,  
And truely I would right sorrie be,  
For to seene you in adversite,  
And guiltlesse I wot well I you leave,  
And all shall passe, and thus take I my leave."

But truely how long it was bitwene,  
That she forsoke him for this Diomede,  
There is none authour telleth it I wene,  
Take every man now to his bookes hedc,

He shall no terme finden, out of drede,  
For though that he began to wowe her sone,  
Ere he her wan, yet was there more to done.

Ne me ne list this selie woman chide  
Ferther than the storie woll devise,  
Her name alas, is published so wide,  
That for her gilt it ought ynough suffise,  
And if I might excuse her in any wise,  
For she so sorrie was for her untrouth,  
Ywis I would excuse her yet for routh.

This Troilus, as I before have told,  
Thus driveth forth, as wel as he hath might,  
But ofte was his herte hote and cold,  
And namely that ilke ninthe night,  
Which on the morrow she had him behight  
To come ayen, God wote full little rest  
Had he that night, nothing to slepe him lest.

Tho laurer crowned Phebus, with his heat  
Gan in his course aie upward as he went,  
To warmen of the east sea the waves wete,  
And Circes doughter song, with fresh entent,  
Whan Troilus his Pandare alter sent,  
And on the walles of the towne they pleide,  
To looke, if they can seene ought of Creseide.

Till it was noone, they stooden for to see  
Who that there came, and every maner wight  
That came fro terre, they saiden it was shee,  
Till that they couden knowen him aright :  
Now was his herte dull, now was it light,  
And thus bejaped stooden for to stare  
About naught, this Troilus and Pandare.

To Pandarus this Troilus tho seide  
"For aught I wot, before noone sikerly,  
Into this toun ne cometh not here Creseide,  
She hath ynough to doen hardely  
To winnen from her father, so trow I,  
Her olde father woll yet make her dine  
Ere that she go, God yeve his herte pine."

Pandarus answerd, "It may well been certain  
And forthy let us dine, I thee beseech,  
And after noone than maist thou come again :"  
And home they go, without more speech,  
And comen ayen, but long may they seech,  
Ere that they finde that they after gape,  
Fortune hem bothe thinketh for to jape.

(Quod Troilus) "I see well now that she  
Is taried with her old father so,  
That ere she come, it woll nigh even be.  
Come forth, I woll unto the yate go,  
These porters ben unkonning evermo,  
And I woll done hem holden up the yate,  
As naught ne were, although she come late."

The day goth fast, and after that came eve,  
And yet came nat to Troilus Creseide,  
He looketh forth by hedge, by tree, by greve,  
And ferre his head over the wall he leide,  
And at the last he tourned him and seide,  
"By God I wote her meaning now Pandare,  
Almost ywis all newe was my care.

"Now doubtelesse this lady can her good,  
I wote she commeth riding prively,  
I commend her wisdom by mine hood,  
She woll nat maken people nicely

Gaure on her whan she commeth, but softly  
By night into the toun she thinketh ride,  
And, dere brother, thinke nat long to abide.

"We have naught else for to done ywis,  
And Pandarus, now wilt thou trowen me,  
Have here my trouth, I see her, yon she is,  
Heave up thine eyen man, mayst thou nat see?"  
Pandere answerde, "Nay, so mote I the,  
Al wrong by God, what saist thou man, wher art,  
That I see yonde asfarre, n'is but a cart."

"Alas, thou sayst right sooth," (quod Troilus)  
"But hardely it is not all for nought,  
That in mine herte I now rejoyce thus,  
It is ayenst some good, I have a thought,  
Not I nat how, but sens that I was wrought,  
Ne felt I such a comfort dare I say,  
She cometh to night, my life that durst I lay."

Pandarus answerde, "It may be well ynough,"  
And held with him of all that ever he saied,  
But in his herte he thought, and soft he lough,  
And to himselfe full soberly he saied,  
"From hasell wood, there jolly Robin plaied,  
Shall come all that thou abidest here,  
Ye, farwell all the snow of ferne yere."

The wardein of the yates gan to call  
The folk, which that without the yates were,  
And bad hem driven in hir beastes all,  
Or all the night they must bleven there,  
And ferre within the night, with many a tere,  
This Troilus gan homeward for to ride,  
For well he seeth it helpeth nat to abide.

But nathelesse, he gladded him in this,  
He thought he misacompted had his day,  
And saied, "I understand have all amis,  
For thilke night I laste Creseide sey,  
She sayd, 'I shall ben here, if that I may,  
Ere that the Moone, O dere herte swete,  
The Lion passe out of this Ariete.'

"For which she may yet hold all her behest,"  
And on the morrow unto the yate he went,  
And up and doune, by west and eke by east  
Upon the walles made he many a went,  
But all for naught, his hope alway him blent,  
For which at night, in sorow and sighe sore,  
He went him home, withouten any more. . . .

*[After a time he sends a letter beseeching her to return,  
and writes again and again. But his faith in her  
is shaken by the tone of her replies, and by evil  
augury interpreted from a dream. Then comes the  
final revelation.]*

Stood on a day in his melancholy  
This Troilus, and in suspectioun  
Of her, for whom he wend to dye,  
And so befell, that throughout Troie town,  
As was the guise, yborne was up and doun  
A manner cote armoure, as saith the story,  
Beforne Deiphebe, insigne of his victory.

The whiche cote, as telleth Lollius,  
Deiphebe it hath rent fro Diomedes  
The same day, and whan this Troilus  
It saw, he gan to taken of it hede,



Avising of the length and of the brede,  
And all the werke, but as he gan behold,  
Full sodainly his herte gan to cold.

As he that on the coler found within  
A brooch, that he Creseide yave at morow  
That she from Troy must nedes twin,  
In remembraunce of him, and of his sorow,  
And she him laid ayen her faith to borow,  
To keepe it aye : but now full well he wist,  
His lady nas no longer on to trist.

He goth him home, and gan full soone send  
For Pandarus, and all this newe chaunce,  
And of this broch, he told him world and end,  
Complaining of her hertes variaunce,  
His longe love, his trouth, and his pennaunce,  
And after Death, without words more,  
Full fast he cried, his rest him to restore.

Than spake he thus, " O lady mine Creseide,  
Where is your faith, and where is your behest ?  
Where is your love, where is your trouth " he seide,  
" Of Diomedee have ye now all the fest ?  
Alas, I would have trowed at the least,  
That sens ye n'olde in trouthe to me stond,  
That ye thus n'olde have holden me in hond.

" Who shall now trowen on any othes mo ?  
Alas, I never would have wend ere this,  
That ye, Creseide, could have chaunged so,  
Ne but I had agilt, and done amis ;  
So cruell wend I nat your herte ywis,  
To slee me thus, alas, your name of trouth  
Is now fordone, and that is all my routh,

"Was there none other broche you list lete,  
To feast with your new love," (quod he)  
"But thilke broche that I with teres wete  
You yave, as for a remembraunce of me?  
None other cause alas, ne had ye,  
But for dispite, and eke for that ye ment  
All utterly to shewen your entent. . . .

Great was the sorow and plaint of Troilus,  
But forth her course fortune aye gan hold,  
Creseide loveth the sonne of Tideus,  
And Troilus mote wepe in cares cold,  
Such is this world, who so it can behold,  
In eche estate is little hertes rest,  
God leve us to take it for the best.

In many cruell battaile out of drede,  
Of Troilus, this ilke noble knight,  
(As men may in these old bookes rede)  
Was seen his knighthood and his great might,  
And dredelesse his ire day and night  
Full cruelly the Grekes aye aboutt,  
And alway most this Diomede, he sought.

And oft time (I finde) that they mette  
With bloody strokes, and with wordes great,  
Assaying how hir speares were whette,  
And God it wote, with many a cruell heat  
Gan Troilus upon his helme to beat,  
But nathelesse, fortune it naught ne would  
Of others hond that either dien should.

And if I had ytaken for to write  
The armes of this ilke worthy man,  
Than would I of his battailes endite,  
And for that I to writen first began

Of his love, I have said as I can  
His worthy deedes, why so list hem here,  
Rede Dares, he can tell hem all yfere.

Beseeching every lady bright of hew,  
And every gentill woman, what she be,  
Albeit that Creseide was untrew,  
That for that gilt ye be nat wroth with me,  
Ye may her gilt in other bookes see,  
And gladder I would write, if you lest,  
Penelopes trouth, and good Alceste.

Ne say I nat this all onely for these men,  
But most for women that betraied be  
Through false folk, God yeve hem sorow, amen,  
That with hir great wit and subtilte  
Betraien you : and this meveth me  
To speake, and in effect you all I pray  
Beth ware of men, and hearkeneth what I say.

Go, little booke, go, my little tragedie,  
There God my maker yet ere that I die,  
So send me might to make some comedie :  
But little booke, make thou none envie,  
But subject ben unto all poesie,  
And kisse the steps whereas thou seest pace  
Of Vergil, Ovid, Homer, Lucan, and Stace.

And for there is so great diversite  
In English, and in writing of our tong,  
So pray I to God, that none miswrite thee,  
Ne the misse-metre, for defaut of tong :  
And redde where so thou be, or eles song,  
That thou be understand, God I beseech,  
But yet to purpose of my rather speech.

The wrath (as I began for you to sey)  
Of Troilus, the Greekes boughten dere,  
For thousandes his hondes maden dey,  
As he that was withouten any pere,  
Save in his time Hector, as I can here,  
But welaway, save onely Goddes will,  
Dispitously him slough the fierce Achill.

And whan that he was slain in this manere,  
His light ghoste full blisfully is went  
Up to the hollownesse of the seventh sphere,  
In his place leting everiche element,  
And there he saw with full avisement  
The erratike sterres, herkening armonie,  
With sownes full of Heavens melodie.

And down from thence, fast he gan advise  
This little spot of earth, that with the see  
Enbraced is, and fully gan despise  
This wretched world, and held all vanite  
To respect of the plaine felicitye  
That is in Heaven above : and at the last,  
There he was slaine, his looking down he cast.

And in himselfe he lough, right at the wo  
Of hem that wepten for his death so fast,  
And dampned all our werkes that followeth so  
The blinde lust, whiche that may nat last,  
And shoulde all our herte on Heaven cast,  
And forth he went, shortly for to tell,  
There as Mercurie sorted him to dwell.

Such fine hath lo, this Troilus for love,  
Such fine hath all his great worthinesse,  
Such fine hath his estate royall above,  
Such fine his lust, such fine hath his noblesse,

Such fine hath false worldes brotelnesse,  
And thus began his loving of Creseide,  
As I have told, and in this wise he deide.

O young fresh folkes, he or she,  
In which that love up groweth with your age,  
Repaireth home from worldly vanite,  
And of your hertes up casteth the visage  
To thilke God, that after his image  
You made, and thinketh all n'is but a faire,  
This world that passeth sone, as floures faire.

And loveth him the which that right for love  
Upon a crosse our soules for to bey,  
First starfe and rose, and sit in Heaven above,  
For he n'll falsen no wight dare I sey,  
That wol his herte all holy on him ley,  
And sens he best to love is and most meeke,  
What needeth fained loves for to seeke.

Lo, here of painems cursed olde rites,  
Lo, here what all hir goddes may availe,  
Lo, here this wretched worldes appetites,  
Lo, here the fine and guerdon for travaile,  
Of Jove, Apollo, of Mars, and such raskaile,  
Lo, here the forme of olde clerkes speech  
In poetrie, if ye hir bookes seech.

O morall Gower, this booke I direct  
To thee, and to the philosophicall Strode,  
To vouchsafe there need is, to correct,  
Of your benignities and zeales good,  
And to the soothfast Christ that starfe on rood,  
With all mine herte of mercy ever I pray,  
And to the Lord aright, thus I speake and say,

Thou one, two, and three, eterne on live,  
That raigest aie in thre, two, and one,  
Uncircumscrip't, and all maist circumscribe,  
Us from visible and invisible sone  
Defend, and to thy mercy everichone,  
So make us, Jesus, to thy mercy digne,  
For love of maide, and mother thine benigne.

**CHAUCER'S WORDS UNTO HIS OWN  
SCRIVENER.**

ADAM Scrivener, if ever it thee befall  
Boece or Troilus for to write new,  
Under thy lockes thou maist have the scall,  
But after my making thou write more trew,  
So oft a day I mote thy werke renew,  
It to correct and eke to rubbe and scrape,  
And all is thorow thy negligence and rape.

## The House of Fame.

---

GOD tourne us every dream to good,  
For it is wonder thing, by the rood,  
To my wit, what causeth swevens  
On the morrow, or on evens,  
And why the effect followeth of some,  
And of some it shal never come,  
Why that it is an avision,  
And why this is a revelation,  
Why this a dreame, why that a sweven,  
And not to every man liche even ;  
Why this a fantome, why that oracles ;  
I n'ot ; but whoso of these miracles  
The causes know bet than I,  
Define he, for I certainly  
Ne can hem not, ne never thinke  
To busie my wit for to swinke  
To know of hir significations  
The gendres, ne distinctions  
Of the times of hem, ne the causes,  
Or why this is more than that is,  
Or yeve folkes complexions,  
Make hem dreame of reflections,  
Or else thus, as other saine,  
For the greate feeblenesse of hir brain,  
By abstinence, or by sicknesse,  
Prison, strife, or great distresse,



Or els by disordinaunce,  
Or natural accustomaunce,  
That some men be too curious  
In studie, or melancolious,  
Or thus, so inly full of drede,  
That no man may him bote rede,  
Or els that devotion  
Of some, and contemplation  
Causen such dreames oft,  
Or that the cruell life unsoft  
Of hem that loves leden,  
Oft hopen much or dreden,  
That purely hir impressions  
Causen hem to have visions,  
Or if spirits han the might  
To make folke to dreame on night,  
Or if the soule of proper kind  
Be so perfite as men find,  
That it wote what is to come,  
And that he warneth all and some  
Of everiche of hir adventures,  
By avisions, or by figures,  
But that our flesh hath no might  
To understand it aright,  
For it is warned too derkely,  
But why the cause is, not wote I.  
Well worth of this thing clerkes  
That treaten of that and of other werkes,  
For I of none opinion  
N'll as now make mention,  
But only that the holy rood  
Tourne us every dreame to good,  
For never sith I was borne,  
Ne no man els me beforne,  
Mette, I trow stedfastly,  
So wonderfull a dreame as I. . . .

But as I slept, me mette I was  
Within a temple ymade of glas,  
In which there were mo images  
Of gold, standing in sundry stages,  
In mo rich tabernacles,  
And with perrie mo pinacles,  
And mo curious portraitures,  
And queint manner of figures  
Of gold worke than I saw ever. . . .

Whan I had seene all this sight  
In this noble temple thus,  
"Hey, lord," thought I, "that madest us,  
Yet saw I never such noblesse  
Of images, nor such richesse  
As I see graven in this church,  
But nought wote I who did hem worch,  
Ne where I am, ne in what countree,  
But now will I out gone and see  
Right at the wicket if I can  
Seene ought where sterring any man,  
That may me tellen where I am."

Whan I out of the dore came,  
I fast about me beheld,  
Than saw I but a large field,  
As farre as ever I might see,  
Without toune, house, or tree,  
Or bush, or grasse, or eared land,  
For all the field was but of sand,  
As small as men may see at eye  
In the desart of Lybye,  
Ne no manner creature,  
That is yformed by nature,  
Ne saw I, me to rede or wisse :  
"O Christ," thought I, "that are in blisse,  
From fantome and illusion  
Me save," and with devotion

Mine eyen to the Heaven I cast,  
Tho was I ware, lo, at the last,  
That fast by the Sunne on hye,  
As kenne might I with mine eye,  
Me thought I saw an egle sore,  
But that it seemed much more  
Than I had any egle ysein ;  
This is as sooth as death certain,  
It was of gold, and shone so bright,  
That never saw men such a sight,  
But if the Heaven had ywonne  
All new of God another sonne,  
To shone the egles fethers bright,  
And somewhat downward gan it light.

EXPLICIT LIBER PRIMUS.

---

LIBER SECUNDUS.

AND with his grim pawes strong,  
Within his sharpe nailes long,  
Me fleyng at a swappe he hent,  
And with his sours againe up went,  
Me caryng in his clawes starke,  
As lightly as I had ben a larke,  
How high I cannot tellen you,  
For I came up I n'ist never how,  
For so astonied and asweved  
Was every virtue in my heved,  
What with his sours and my dread,  
That all my feeling gan to dead,  
For why? it was a great affray.  
Thus I long in his clawes lay,

Till at the last he to me spake  
In mans voice, and said "Awake,  
And be not agast so for shame,"  
And called me tho by my name,  
And, for I should better abraid,  
Me to awake thus he said,  
Right in the same voice and stevin,  
That useth one that I can nevin,  
And with that voice, sooth to saine,  
My mind came to me again,  
For it was goodly said to me,  
So nas it never wont to be ;  
And, herewithal, I gan to stere,  
As he me in his feet bere,  
Till that he felt that I had heat,  
And felt eke tho mine herte beat,  
And tho gan he me to disport,  
And with gentle wordes me comfort,  
And said twice, "Saint Mary,  
Thou art a noyous thing to cary,  
And nothing needeth it, parde,  
For also, wise God helpe me,  
As thou no harme shalt have of this,  
And this case that betiddeth thee is  
For thy lore and for thy prow ;  
Let see, darst thou looke yet now?  
Be full ensured boldely,  
I am thy friend : " and therewith I  
Gan for to wonder in my mind.  
O God," quod I : " thad madest all kind,  
Shall I none otherwise die,  
Whether Jove will me stellifie,  
Or what thing may this signifie?  
I am neither Enocke, ne Helie,  
Ne Romulus, ne Ganimede,  
That were bore up, as men rede,

To Heaven with dan Jupiter,  
And made the gods boteler :"  
Io, this was tho my fantasie,  
But he that bare gan aspie  
That I so thought, and said this,  
"Thou deemest of thy selfe amis,  
For Jove is not thereabout,  
I dare thee put full out of doubt,  
To make of the yet a sterre,  
But ere I beare thee much ferre,  
I will thee tell what I am,  
And whider thou shalt, and why I came  
To do this, so that thou take  
Good herte, and not for feare quake."  
"Gladly," quod I : "Now well," quod he :  
"First, I that in my feet have the,  
Of whom thou hast feare and wonder,  
I am dwelling with the god of thonder,  
Which men callen Jupiter,  
That doth me flien full oft fer,  
To do all his commaundement,  
And for this cause he hath me sent  
To thee : herke now by thy trouth,  
Certaine he hath of thee routh,  
That thou hast so truely  
Long served ententifely  
His blind newew Cupido,  
And faire Venus also,  
Without guerdon ever yet,  
And nathelesse hast set thy wit,  
Although in thy head full little is,  
To make bookes, songs, and dities  
In rime, or else in cadence,  
As thou best canst, in reverence  
Of Love, and of his servaunts eke,  
That have his service sought and seke,

And painest thee to praise his art,  
Although thou haddest never part,  
Wherefore also, God me blesse,  
Jovis halt in great humblesse,  
And vertue eke, that thou wilt make  
A night full oft thine head to ake, .  
In thy study so thou writest  
And evermore of Love enditest,  
In honour of him and praisings,  
And in his folkes furtherings,  
And in hir matter all devisest,  
And not him ne his folke dispisest,  
Although thou maist go in the daunce  
Of hem that him list not avaunce ;  
Wherefore, as I said ywis,  
Jupiter considreth well this,  
And also beausire, of other things,  
That is, thou haste no tidings  
Of Loves folke, if they be glade,  
Ne of nothing else that God made,  
And not onely fro ferre countree  
That no tidings comen to thee,  
Not of thy very neighbours,  
That dwellen almost at thy dores,  
Thou hearest neither that ne this,  
For whan thy labour all done is,  
And hast made all thy reckonings,  
In stead of rest and of new things,  
Thou goest home to thine house anone,  
And also dombe as a stone  
Thou sittest at another booke,  
Till fully dased is thy looke,  
And livest thus as an hermite,  
Although thine abstinence is lite. . . .  
"Geffray, thou wotest well this,  
That every kindly thing that is,

Hath a kindly stede there he  
May best in it conserved be,  
Unto which place every thing,  
Through his kindly enclining,  
Meveth for to come to,  
Whan that it is away therefro,  
As thus, lo, how thou maist al day see,  
Take any thing that heavie bee,  
As stone or lead, or thing of weight,  
And beare it never so hie on height,  
Let go thine hand, it falleth downe.  
Right so say I by fire or sowne  
Or smoke, or other things light,  
Alway they seeke upward on height,  
Light things up, and downward charge,  
While everich of hem be at large,  
And for this cause thou maist well see,  
That every river unto the see  
Enclined is to go by kind,  
And by these skilles, as I find,  
Have fishes dwelling in flood and see,  
And trees eke on the earth be ;  
Thus every thing by his reason  
Hath his own proper mansion,  
To which he seeketh to repaire,  
There as it should nat appaire.

“Lo, this sentence is knowne couth  
Of every philosophers mouth,  
As Aristotle and dan Platone,  
And other clerkes many one,  
And to confirme my reasoun,  
Thou wost well that speech is soun,  
Or else no man might it here,  
Now herke what I woll thee lere.

“Sowne is not but eyre ybroken,  
And every speech that is spoken.

Loud or prive, foule or faire,  
In his substaunce is but eyre,  
For as flame is but lighted smoke,  
Right so is sowne eyre ybroke,  
But this may be in many wise,  
Of which I will thee devise ;  
As sowne cometh of pipe or harpe  
For when a pipe is blowen sharpe,  
The eyre is twist with violence,  
And rent ; lo, this is my sentence :  
Eke, whan men harpe strings smite,  
Wheder it be much or lite,  
Lo, with a stroke the eyre it breketh,  
And right so breaketh it whan men speaketh,  
Thus, wost thou well, what thing is speach,  
Now henceforth, I will thee teach  
How everich speech, voice, or soun,  
Through his multiplicatioun,  
Though it were piped of a mouse,  
Mote needs come to Fames House ;  
I prove it thus, take heed now  
By experience, for if that thou  
Threw in a water now, a stone,  
Well wost thou it will make, anone,  
A little roundell as a circle,  
Paraventure as broad as a covercle,  
And right anone, thou shalt see wele,  
That whele cercle wil cause another whele,  
And that the third, and so forth brother,  
Every cercle causing other,  
Broader than himselfe was,  
And thus from roundell to compas,  
Ech about other going,  
Causeth of others stering  
And multiplying evermo,  
Till it be so farre go



That it at both brinkes bee,  
Although thou may it not see  
Above, yet gothe it alway under,  
Though thou thinke it a great wonder,  
And who so saith of trouth I vary,  
Bid him prove the contrary ;  
And right thus every word ywis,  
That loud or privie yspoken is,  
Moveth first an eyre about,  
And of his moving, out of doubt,  
Another eyre anone is moved ;  
As I have of the water proved,  
That every cercle causeth other,  
Right so of eyre, my leve brother ;  
Everich eyre in other stereth  
More and more, and speech up beareth,  
Or voice of noise, word or soun,  
Aye through multiplication,  
Till it be at the House of Fame ;  
Take it in earnest or in game,  
Now have I told, if thou have mind,  
How speech or sowne, of pure kind  
Enclined is upward to meve ;  
This maiest thou fele well by preve,  
And that same stede ywis,  
That every thing enclined to is,  
Hath his kindliche stede,  
That sheweth it without drede,  
That kindly the mansioun  
Of everich speeche of every soun,  
Be it either foule or faire,  
Hath his kind place in aire,  
And sith that every thing ywis,  
Out of his kind place ywis,  
Moveth thider for to go,  
If it away be therefro,

As I have before proved thee,  
It sheweth every soun, parde,  
Moveth kindely to pace,  
As up into his kind place;  
And this place of which I tell,  
There as Fame list to dwell,  
It sette amiddes of these three,  
Heaven, Earth, and eke the see,  
As most conservatife the soun;  
Than is this the conclusion,  
That every speech of every man,  
As I thee tell first began,  
Moveth up on height to pace  
Kindly to Fames place.

"Tell me this now faithfully,  
Have I not proved thus simply,  
Without any subtelte  
Of speech, or great prolixite  
Of termes of philosophy,  
Of figures of poetry,  
Or colours of rhetorike?  
Perde, it ought thee to like,  
For hard language, and hard matere  
Is incombrous for to here  
At ones, wost thou not well this?"  
And I answered and said "Yes." . . .

Tho gan I wexe in a were,  
And said, "I wote well I am here,  
But whether in body or in goost,  
I n'ot ywis, but God thou woost;"  
For more clere entendement,  
N'as me never yet ysent;  
And than thought I on Marcian,  
And eke of Anticlaudian,  
That sothe was hir descripcion  
Of all the Heavens region,

As far as that I saw the preve,  
And, therefore, I can hem leve.

With that the egle gan to crie,  
"Let be," quod he, "thy fantasie,  
Wilt thou learne of sterres ought?"

"Nay certainly," quod I, "right nought."  
"And why?" quod he. "For I am old,"  
"Or els would I thee have told,"

Quod he, "the sterres names, lo,  
And all the Heavens signs to,  
And which they be."—"No force," quod I,  
"Yes, parde," quod he, "wost thou why?"

For whan thou redest poetry,  
How the goddes can stellify  
Birde, fishe, or him, or her,  
As the ravin and other,  
Or Ariones harpe fine,  
Castor, Polexe, or Delphine,  
Or Athalantes daughters seven,  
How all these are set in Heven,  
For though thou have hem ofte in hand,  
Yet n'ost thou nat where they stand."

"No force," quod I, "it is no need,  
As well I leve, so God me speed,  
Hem that writen of this matere,  
As though I knew hir places here,  
And eke they semen here so bright,  
It should shenden all my sight,

To look on hem:—"That may well be,"  
Quod he, and so forth bare he me  
A while, and tho he gan to cry,  
(That never herde I thing so hie)  
"Hold up thine heed, for all is well,  
Saint Julian, lo, bonne hostell,  
See here the House of Fame, lo,  
Mayst thou not here that I do?"

"What?" quod I. "The great sowne,"  
Quod he, "that rombleth up and downe  
In Fames House full of tidings,  
Both of fayre speech and chidings,  
And of false and sothe compouned,  
Herken well, it is not rowned.

Herest thou not the great swough?"

"Yes, perde," quod I, "wel ynough."

"And what sowne is it like?" quod he.

"Parde, lyke the beating of the see,"

Quod I, "against the roches holow,  
Whan tempests done her shippes swolow,  
And that a man stand out of doute,  
A myle thens, and here it route.

"Or els lyke the humbling  
After the clappe of a thundring,  
When Jovis hath the eyre ybete,  
But it doth me for feare swete."

"Nay, drede thee not thereof," quod he,  
"It is nothing that will biten thee,  
Thou shalt have no harme truely."

And with that worde both he and I  
As nigh the place arrived were,  
As men might cast with a spere,  
I n'ist how, but in a strete  
He set me faire on my feete,  
And said, "Walke forth a pace  
And telle thine adventure and case,  
That thou shalt finde in Fames place." . . .

EXPLICIT LIBER SECUNDIS.

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## LIBER TERTIUS.

WHEN I was from the Egle gone,  
I gan behold upon this place,  
And certaine, or I further passe,  
I woll you all the shape devise,  
Of house and citee, and all the wise  
How I gan to this place approche,  
That stood upon so hie a roche,  
Hier standeth none in Spaine ;  
But up I clambe with moch payne,  
And though to climbe greved mee,  
Yet I ententife was to see,  
And for to poren wondre low,  
If I coude any wise yknow  
What maner stone this roche was,  
For it was like a limed glas,  
But that it shone full more clere,  
But of what congeled matere  
It was, I n'iste redely,  
But at the last espied I,  
And found that it was everydele,  
A roche of yse and not of stele :  
Thought I, " By saint Thomas of Kent,  
This were a feeble foundement  
To builden on a place hie,  
He ought him little to glorifie,  
That hereon bilte, God so me save."

Tho sawe I all the hall ygrave  
With famous folkes names fele,  
That had been in moch wele,  
And hir fames wide yblow,  
But well unneth might I know  
Any letters for to rede  
Hir names by, for, out of drede,

They weren almost of thawed so,  
That of the letters one or two  
Were molte away of every name,  
So unfamous was wexe her fame;  
But men say, what may ever last?

Tho gan I in mine herte cast,  
That they were molte away for heate,  
And not away with stormes beate,  
For on that other side I sey,  
Of this hill, that northward ley,  
How it was written full of names  
Of folke that had afore great fames,  
Of old time, and yet they were  
As fresh as men had written hem there  
The self-day, or that houre

That I on hem gan to poure,  
But well I wiste what it made,  
It was conserved with the shade,  
All the writing that I sie,  
Of a castell that so stode on hie,  
And stode eke in so cold a place  
That heate might it not deface. . . .

But all on hie above a dees,  
Satte in a see imperiall,  
That made was of rubie royall,  
Which that a carbuncle is ycalled,  
I sawe prepetually ystalled,  
A feminine creature,  
That never formed by nature  
Was such another thing I saie :  
For alderfirst, soth to saie,  
Me thought that she was so lite,  
That the length of a cubite,  
Was lenger than she seemed be,  
But thus soone in a while she,  
Her self tho wonderly streight,

That with her feet she th'erthe reight,  
And with her hedde she touched Heaven,  
There as shineth the sterres seven,  
And thereto yet, as to my wit,  
I saw a great wonder yet,  
Upon her eyen to behold,  
But certainly I hem never told,  
For as fele eyen has she,  
As fethers upon foules be,  
Or weren on the beasts foure,  
That Goddes trone can honour,  
As writeth John in the Apocalips,  
Her heer that was oundie and crips,  
As burned gold it shone to see.

And sothe to tellen, also shee  
Had also fele up standing eares,  
And tonges, as on beast been heares,  
And on her seete woxen saw I,  
Partriche winges redily.

But Lord the perrie and the richesse  
I saw sitting on the goddesse,  
And the heavenly melodie  
Of songes full of armonie  
I heard about her trone ysong,  
That all the palais wall rong,  
So song the mighty Muse, she  
That cleped is Caliope,  
And her seven sisterne eke,  
That in hir faces seemen meke,  
And evermore eternally  
They song of Fame, tho heard I,  
"Heried be thou and thy name,  
Goddes of renoun and of Fame!" . . .

Tho gan I looke about and see,  
That there come entring into the hall  
A right great company withall,

And that of sondry regions,  
Of all kind of condicions,  
That dwell in yearth under the Moone,  
Poore and riche ; and all so soone  
As they were come into the hall,  
They gan on knees doune to fall,  
Before this ilke noble queene,  
And said, " Graunt us lady sheene,  
Eche of us of thy grace a bone,"  
And some of hem she graunted sone,  
And some she warned well and faire,  
And some she graunted the contraire  
Of hir asking utterly :  
But this I say you truely,  
What her grace was, I n'ist,  
For of these folke full well I wist,  
They had good fame eche deserved,  
Although they were diversly served,  
Right as her sister, dame Fortune,  
Is wont to serve in commune.

Now herken how she gan to pay  
Hem that gan her of grace pray,  
And yet, lo, all this companie  
Saiden soth, and not a lie.

"Madame," sayd they, " we bee  
Folke that here besechen thee,  
That thou graunt us now good fame,  
And let our workes have good name  
In full recompensacioun  
Of good worke, give us good renoun."

"I warne it you," quod she, " anone,  
Ye get of me good fame none,  
By God, and therefore go your way."

"Alas," quod they, "and welaway !  
Tell us what your cause may be."

"For me list it not," quod she,



"No wight shall speake of you, ywis,  
Good ne harme, ne that ne this."

And with that worde she gan to call  
Her messenger that was in hall,  
And bad that he should faste gone,  
Upon paine to be blinde anone,  
For Eolus the god of winde,  
"In Trace there ye shall him finde,  
And bid him bring his clarioun,  
That is full divers of his soun,  
And it is cleped cleare laude,  
With which he wont is to heraude,  
Hem that me list ypraised bee ;  
And also bid him how that hee  
Bring eke his other clarioun,  
That height sclaunder in every toun,  
With which he wont is to diffame  
Hem that me list, and doe hem shame." . . .

This Eolus no where abode,  
Till he was come to Fames feete,  
And eke the man that Triton heete,  
And there he stode as still as stone,  
And herewithall, there came anone,  
Another huge companie  
Of good folke and gan to crie,  
"Lady, graunt us now good fame,  
And let our workes have that name,  
Now in honour of gentilnesse,  
And also God your soule blesse,  
For we han well deserved it,  
Therefore is right that we be quit."  
"As thrive I," quod she, "ye shall faile,  
Good workes shall you not availe,  
To have of me good fame as now,  
But wote ye what, I graunt you,  
That ye shall have a shrewd name,

And wicked loos and worse fame,  
Though ye good loos have well deserved,  
Now goeth your way for you been served :  
And thou dan Eolus," quod she,  
"Take forth thy trumpe anone, let see,  
That is ycleped sclaunder light,  
And blow hir loos, that every wight  
Speak of hem harme and shreudnesse,  
In stede of good and worthinesse,  
For thou shalt trumpe all the contrarie,  
Of that they have done well and faire."

Alas, thought I, what adventures  
Have these sory creatures,  
That they among all the pres,  
Should this be shamed gittles?  
But what, it must needes be.  
What did this Eolus, but he  
Tooke out his blacke trumpe of bras,  
That fouler than the Devil was,  
And gan this trompe for to blow,  
As all the world should overthrow.  
Throughout every regioun,  
Went this foule trumpes soun,  
As swifte as a pellet out of a gonne,  
When fire is in the poudre ronne,  
And soch a smoke gan out wende,  
Out of the foule trumpes ende,  
Blacke, blue, grenishe, swartish, red,  
As doth where that man melte led,  
Lo, and on hie from the tewell ;  
And thereto, one thing saw I well,  
That the ferther that it ranne,  
The greater wexen it beganne,  
As doth the river from a well,  
And it stanke as the pitte of Hell :  
Alas, thus was hir shame yrong,

And giltlesse on every tong.

Tho came the third companie,  
And gone up to the dees to hie,  
And doune on knees they fell anone,  
And saiden, "We been everichone  
Folke that han full truely  
Deserved fame rightfully,  
And prayed you it might be know,  
Right as it is and forth blow."

"I graunt," quod she, "for now me list  
That your good workes shall be wist,  
And yet ye shall have better loos,  
Right in dispite of all your foos,  
Than worthy is, and that anone :  
Let now," quod she, "thy trumpe gone,  
Thou Eolus that is so blacke,  
And out thine other trumpe take  
That hight laude, and blow it so  
That through the world hir fame go,  
All easely and not too fast,  
That it be knowen at the last."

"Full gladly, lady mine," he saied,  
And out his trumpe of gold he braied  
Anone, and set it to his mouth,  
And blewe it east, west, and south,  
And north, as loude as any thonder,  
That every wight hath of it wonder,  
So brode it ran or that it stent,  
And certes, all the breath that went  
Out of his trumpes mouth smelde  
As men a potte full of baume helde  
Among a basket full of roses,  
This favour did he to hir loses.

And right with this I gan espie,  
There came the fowerth companie,  
But certaine they were wonder fewe,

And gonne to standen on a rewe,  
And saiden, "Certes, lady bright,  
We have done well with all our might,  
But we ne keepe to have fame ;  
Hhide our workes and our name,  
For Goddes love, for certes wee  
Have surely done it for bountee,  
And for no manner other thing."

"I graunt you all your asking,"  
Quod she, "let your workes be dedde."

With that about I tourned my hedde,  
And sawe anone the fifth rout  
That to this lady gan lout,  
And doune on knees, anone, to fall,  
And to her tho besoughten all,  
To hiden hir good workes eke,  
And said, they yeve not a leke  
For no fame, ne soch renoun,  
For they for contemplacioun,  
And Goddes love had it wrought,  
Ne of fame would they nought.

"What!" quod she, "and be ye wood?  
And wene ye for to do good,  
And for to have of that no fame?  
Have ye dispite to have my name?  
Nay, ye shall lien everichone :  
Blowe thy trumpe and that anone,"  
Quod she, "thou Eolus I hote,  
And ring these folkes workes by note,  
That all the world may of it here :"  
And he gan blowe hir loos so cleare  
In his golden clarioun,  
Through the worlde went the soun,  
Also kindly, and eke so soft,  
That their fame was blowe aloft.

Tho came the sixt companie,

And gan fast to Fame crie,  
Right verely in this manere,  
They saiden, "Mercy, lady dere,  
To tell certain as it is,  
We have done neither that ne this,  
But idell all our life hath be,  
But nathelesse, yet pray we,  
That we may have as good a fame,  
And great renome and known name,  
As they that have do noble jestes,  
And acheved all hir questes,  
As well of love as other thing. . . .

With that I gan about wend,  
For one that stode right at my backe,  
Me thought full goodly to me spake,  
And said, "Frende, what is thy name?  
Arte thou come hider to have fame?"

"Nay forsothe, frende," quod I,  
"I come not hither, graunt mercy,  
For no soch cause by my heed,  
Suffiseth me as I were deed,  
That no wight have my name in honde,  
I wot my selfe best how I stonde,  
For what I drie or what I thinke,  
I woll my selfe all it drinke,  
Certaine for the more part,  
As ferforth as I can mine art."  
"What dost thou here than?" quod he :  
Quod I, "that woll I tell thee,  
The cause why I stand here,  
Some new tidings for to lere,  
Some new thing, I not what,  
Tidings eyther this or that,  
Of love, or such things glade,  
For certainly he that me made  
To come hyder, said to mee

I sholde bothe heare and see,  
In this place wonder things,  
But these be no soch tidings  
As I meant of:—"No?" quod he:  
And I answerde "No, parde,  
For well I wote ever yet,  
Sith that first I had wit,  
That some folke han desired fame,  
Diversly, and loos and name,  
But certainly I n'ist how,  
Ne where that Fame dwelled or now,  
Ne eke of her description,  
Ne also her condicion,  
Ne the order of her dome,  
Knew I not till hider come." . . .

Tho gan I forth with him gone,  
Out of the castell, sothe to sey.

Tho sawe I stand in a valey,  
Under the castell fast by,  
An house, that domus Dedali,  
That Laborintus ycleped is,  
N'as made so wonderly ywis,  
Ne halfe so queintly ywrought,  
And evermo, as swift as thought,  
This queint house about went,  
That nevermo it still stent,  
And there came out so great a noise,  
That had it stonde upon Oise,  
Men might have heard it easily  
To Rome, I trowe sikerly,  
And the noise which that I herde,  
For all the world right so it ferde,  
As doth the routing of the stone,  
That fro th'engin is letyn gone . . .  
And eke this house hath of entrees  
As many as leves ben on trees,

*THE HOUSE OF FAME.*

In sommer whan they been greene,  
And on the rose yet men may seene  
A thousand holes, and wel mo,  
To letten the sowne out go,  
And by day in every tide  
Bene all the dores open wide,  
And by night eche one unshet,  
Ne porter is there none to let  
No maner tidings in to pace,  
Ne never rest is in that place,  
That it n'is filled full of tidings,  
Eyther loude or of whisperings,  
And ever all the houses angles  
Is ful of rownings and of jangles,  
Of werres, of peace, of mariages,  
Of restes, and of labour, of viages,  
Of abode, of death, and of lyfe,  
Of love, of hate, accord, of strife,  
Of losse, of lore, and of winnings,  
Of heale, of sicknesse, or of lesings,  
Of faire wether, and eke of tempests,  
Of qualme, of folke, and of beests,  
Of divers transmutacions,  
Of estates and eke of regions,  
Of trust, of drede, of jalousie,  
Of witte, of winning, of folie,  
Of plenty, and of great famine,  
Of chepe, derth, and of ruine,  
Of good or misgovernment,  
Of fire, and of divers accident. . . .  
With this word he right anone,  
Hent me up bytwene his tone,  
And at a window in me brought,  
That in this house was at me thought,  
And therewithall, me thought it stent,  
And nothing it about went,

And me set in the floore adoun ;  
But such a great congregacioun  
Of folke as I sawe rome about,  
Some within and some without,  
N'as never seene, ne shall be este,  
That certes, in this world n'is leste  
So many formed by nature,  
Ne need so many a creature,  
That wel unneth in that place  
Had I foote brede of space ;  
And every wight that I sawe there,  
Rowned everich in others eere,  
A new tiding prively,  
Or els he told it all openly  
Right thus, and said, " N'ost nat thou  
That is betidde, and lo, right now ? "  
" No," quod he, " tell me what : "  
And than he told him this and that,  
And swore thereto that it was soth,  
Thus hath he said, and thus he doth,  
And this shal be, and thus herde I say,  
That shal be found that dare I lay :  
That all the folke that is on live,  
Ne have the conning to discrive,  
Tho thinges that I herde there,  
What a loude, and what in eere ;  
But all the wonder most was this,  
Whan one had herd a thing ywis,  
He came streight to another wight  
And gan him tellen anon right,  
The same that him was told  
Or it a forlong way was old,  
And gan somewhat for to eche  
To this tiding in his speche,  
More than ever it spoken was,  
And nat so sone departet n'as



Tho fro him that he ne mette  
With the thîrd, and ere he lette  
Any stound he told hym else,  
Where the tidings sothe or false,  
Yet wold he tell it natheles,  
And evermore with mo encrees,  
Than it was erst : thus north and south  
Went every tiding fro mouth to mouth,  
And that encreasing evermo,  
As fire is wont to quicken and go  
From a sparcle sprongen amis,  
Till a citie brent up is.

And whan that was full up sprong,  
And waxen more on every tonge,  
Than ever it was, and went anone,  
Up to a window out to gone,  
Or but it might out there passe,  
It gan out crepe at some crevasse,  
And flewe forth fast for the nones.

## The Legend of Good Women.

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### PROLOGUE.

A THOUSAND times I have heard men tell,  
That there is joy in Heaven, and pain in Hell,  
And I accord it wele that it is so,  
But nathelesse yet wote I wele also,  
That there n'is non dwelling in this countre,  
That either hath in Heaven or in Hell ybe,  
Ne may of it none other waies witten,  
But as he heard sayd, or found it written,  
For by assay there may no man it preve.

But God forbede but men should leve  
Wel more thing than they have seen with eye,  
Men shall nat wenen every thing a lie  
But if himself he seeth, or els it dooth,  
For, God wote, thing is never the lesse soth,  
Though every wight ne may it not ysee.  
Bernarde the monke ne saugh all, parde,  
Than mote we to bookes that we find,  
(Through which that olde things ben in mind)  
And to the doctrine of the old wise,  
Yeve credence, in every skilful wise,  
That tellen of the olde apprevd stories,  
Of holines, of reignes, of victories,  
Of love, of hate, and other sundry things,  
Of which I make not many rehearsings :

And if that old bookes were away,  
Ylorne were of all remembraunce the kay.

Well ought us than, honouren and beleve  
These bookes, there we han none other preve.

And as for me, though that I can but lite,  
On bookes for to rede I me delite,  
And to hem yeve I faith and full credence,  
And in mine herte have hem in reverence  
So hertely, that there is game none,  
That fro my bookes maketh me to gone,  
But it be seldome on the holy daie,  
Save certainly, whan that the month of May  
Is comen, and that I hear the foules sing,  
And that the floures ginnen for to spring,  
Farwell my booke, and my devotion.

Now have I than eke this condition,  
That of all the floures in the mede,  
Than love I most these floures white and rede,  
Soch that men callen daisies in our toun,  
To hem I have so great affectioun,  
As I sayd erst, whan comen is the May,  
That in my bedde there daweth me no day,  
That I n'am up and walking in the mede,  
To seen this floure ayenst the Sunne sprede,  
Whan it up riseth early by the morrow,  
That blisfull sight softeneth all my sorow,  
So glad am I, whan that I have presence  
Of it to done it all reverence,  
As she that is of all floures the floure,  
Fulfiled of all vertue and honoure,  
And every ylike faire, and fresh of hewe,  
And ever I love it, and ever ylike newe,  
And eyer shall, till that mine herte die,  
All sweare I not, of this I woll not lie.

There loved no wight hotter in his life,  
And whan that it is eve I renne blithe,

As sone as ever the Sunne ginneth west,  
 To seene this floure, how it woll go to rest,  
 For feare of night, so hateth she derkenesse,  
 Her chere is plainly spred in the brightnesse  
 Of the Sunne, for there it woll enclose :  
 Alas, that I ne had English rime, or prose  
 Suffisaunt this floure to praise aright,  
 But helpeth ye, that han conning and might,  
 Ye lovers, that can make of sentement,  
 In this case ought ye be diligent,  
 To forthren me somewhat in my labour,  
 Whether ye been with the lefe or with the flour,  
 Full well I wote, that ye han here beforne  
 Of making ropen, and had alway the corne,  
 And I come after, glening here and there,  
 And am full glad if I may finde an eare,  
 Of any goodly worde that ye han left,  
 And though it happen me to rehearsen eft,  
 That ye han in your freshe songes sayd,  
 Forbareth me, and beth not evill apayd,  
 Sith that ye se, I doe it in the honour  
 Of love, and eke of service of the flour,  
 Whom that I serve, as I have wit or might,  
 She is the clerenesse and the very light,  
 That in this derke world me wint and ledeth ;  
 The herte within my sorowfull brest you dredeth,  
 And loveth so sore, that ye ben verily  
 The maistres of my wit, and nothing I,  
 My word, my workes, is knit so in your bonde  
 That as an harpe obeieth to the honde,  
 And make it soun after his fingering,  
 Right so mowe ye out of mine herte bring,  
 Soch voice, right as you list, to laugh or pain ;  
 Be ye my guide, and lady soverain !  
 As to mine yearthly God, to you I call,  
 Both in this werke, and my sorowes all.

But wherefore that I spake to yeve credence  
To old stories, and done hem reverence,  
And that men musten more thing bileve  
That men may seen at eye or els preve,  
That shall I sein, whan that I see my time,  
I may nat all atones speake in rime ;  
My busie ghost, that thursteth alway new  
To seen this flour so yong, so fresh of hew,  
Constrained me, with so gredy desire,  
That in my herte I fele yet the fire,  
That made me rise ere it were day,  
And this was now the first morow of May,  
With dreadfull herte and glad devotion  
For to been at the resurrection  
Of this floure, whan that it should unclose  
Again the Sunne, that rose as redde as rose,  
That in the brest was of the beast that day,  
That Angenores daughter ladde away :  
And doune on knees, anon, right I me sette,  
And as I could, this fresh floure I grette,  
Kneeling alway, till it unclosed was,  
Upon the small, soft, swete gras,  
That was with floures swete embrouded all,  
Of such sweetnesse, and such odour over all,  
That for to speake of gomme, herbe, or tree,  
Comparison may not ymaked be,  
For it surmounteth plainly all odoures,  
And of riche beaute of floures :  
Forgotten had the yearth his poore estate  
Of Winter, that him naked made and mate,  
And with his sword of cold so sore greved ;  
Nor hath the attempre sunne al that releved  
That naked was, and cled it new again ;  
The small foules of the season fain,  
That of the panter and the net been scaped,  
Upon the fouler, that hem made awhaped

In Winter, and destroyed had hir brood,  
 In his despite hem thought it did hem good  
 To sing of him, and in hir song dispise  
 The foule chorle, that for his covetise,  
 Had hem betraied with his sophistrie,  
 This was hir song, "The fouler we defie,  
 And all his craft:" and some songen clere,  
 Laies of love, that joy it was to here,  
 In worshipping and praying of hir make,  
 And for the new blisfull Somers sake,  
 Upon the braunches full of blosmes soft,  
 In hir dilite, they tourned hem ful oft,  
 And songen, "Blissed be Saint Valentine,  
 For on his day I chese you to be mine,  
 Withouten repenting mine herte swete;"  
 And therewithall hir bekens gonnen mete, . . .  
 And tho that had done unkindnesse,  
 And doeth the tidife, for new fanglenesse,  
 Besought mercy of her trespassing,  
 And humbly song hir repenting,  
 And sworn on the blosmes to be true,  
 So that hir makes would upon hem rue,  
 And at the last maden hir acorde,  
 All found they Daunger for the time a lord,  
 Yet Pite, through his strong gentill might,  
 Foryave, and made Mercy passen right  
 Through Innocence, and ruled Curtesie:  
 But I ne cleape it nat innocence folie,  
 Ne false pite, for vertue is the meane,  
 As eticke sayth, in soch maner I meane.  
 And thus these foule, voide of all malice,  
 Acordeden to love, and lasten vice  
 Of hate, and song all of one acorde,  
 "Welcome Sommer, our governour and lorde."  
 And Zehpirus, and Flora gentelly,  
 Yave to the floures soft and tenderly,

Hir swote breth, and made hem for to sprede,  
As god and goddesse of the flourie mede,  
In which me thoughte I might day by day,  
Dwellen alway, the joly month of May,  
Withouten slepe, withouten meat or drinke :  
Adowne full softly I gan to sinke,  
And leaning on my elbow and my side,  
The long day I shope me for to abide,  
For nothing els, and I shall nat lie,  
But for to looke upon the daisie,  
That well by reason men it call may  
The daisie, or els the eye of the day,  
The emprise, and floure of floures all,  
I pray to God that faire mote she fall,  
And all that loven floures, for her sake :  
But nathelesse, ne wene nat that I make  
In praising of the floure againe the lefe,  
No more than of the corne againe the shefe :  
For as to me n'is lever none ne lother,  
I n'am witholden yet with never nother,  
Ne I not who serveth lefe, ne who the floure,  
Well brouken they hir service or laboure,  
For this thing is all of another tonne,  
Of old storie, er soch thing was begonne.  
Whan that the Sunne out the south gan west,  
And that this floure gan close, and gan to rest,  
For derknes of the night, the which she dred,  
Home to mine house full swiftly I me sped  
To gone to rest, and earely for to rise,  
To seene this floure to sprede, as I devise,  
And in a little herber that I have,  
That benched was on turves fresh ygrave,  
I bad men shoulde me my couche make,  
For deintie of the newe Sommers sake,  
I bad hem strawen floures on my bedde ;  
Whan I was laid, and had mine eyen hedde,

I fell a slepe, and slept an houre or two,  
 Me met how I lay in the medow tho,  
 To seen this floure, that I loved so and drede,  
 And from a ferre came walking in the mede  
 The god of love, and in his hand a queene,  
 And she was clad in royall habite grene,  
 A fret of golde she had next her heere,  
 And upon that a white croune she beare,  
 With flourouns small, and I shall not lie,  
 For all the world right as a daisie  
 Ycrowned is, with white leaves lite,  
 So were the florouns of her croune white,  
 For of o perle fine orientall,  
 Her white croune was ymaked all,  
 For which the white croune above the grene  
 Made her like a daisie for to seme,  
 Considred eke her fret of gold above :  
 Yclothed was this mighty god of love  
 In silke, embroided full of grene greves,  
 In which a fret of redde rose leves,  
 The freshest sens the world was first begun ;  
 His gilt heere was crowned with a sun,  
 In stede of gold, for hevinesse and weight,  
 Therwith, me thought, his face shone so bright  
 That well unnethes might I him behold,  
 And in his hand, me thought, I saw him hold  
 Two firie dartes, as the gledes rede,  
 And angelike his winges saw I sprede :  
 And all be that men sain that blinde is he,  
 Algate, me thought, that he might se,  
 For sternely on me he gan behold,  
 So that his loking doeth mine herte cold,  
 And by the hand he held this noble queene,  
 Crowned with white, and clothed al in greene,  
 So womanly, so benigne, and so meke,  
 That in this worlde though that men wold seke,



Halfe her beaute should they not finde  
In creature that formed is by kinde,  
And therefore may I sain as thinketh me,  
This song in praising of this lady fre.

“ Hide, Absalon, thy gilte tresses clere,  
Hester lay thou thy mekenesse all adoun,  
Hhide, Jonathas, all thy frendly manere,  
Penelopee, and Marcia Catoun,  
Make of your wifehode no comparisoun,  
Hide your beauties, Isoude and Helein,  
My lady cometh, that all this may distain.

“ Thy faire body let it not appere,  
Lavine, and thou Lucrece of Rome toun,  
And Polixene, that boughten love so dere,  
And Cleopatras, with all thy passioun,  
Hhide your trouthe of love, and your renoun,  
And thou Tisbe, that hast of love such pain,  
My lady commeth, that all this may distain.

“ Hero, Dido, Laodomia, al yfere,  
And Phillis, hanging for Demophoun,  
And Canace, espied by thy chere,  
Hipsiphile betrayed with Jasoun,  
Maketh of your trouth neither boste ne soun,  
Nor Hipermistre, or Ariadne, ye twain,  
My lady cometh, that all this may distain.”

This balade may full well ysongen be,  
As I have sayd erst, by my lady fre,  
For certainly, all these mowe not suffice,  
To apperen with my lady in no wise,  
For as the Sunne woll the fire distain,  
So passeth all my lady souverain,

That is so good, so faire, so debonaire,  
I pray to God that ever fall her faire,  
For nad comforte ben of her presence,  
I had ben dead, withouten any defence,  
For drede of Loves wordes, and his chere,  
As whan time is, hereafter ye shall here.

Behind this god of love upon the grene,  
I saw coming of ladies ninetene,  
In roiall habit, a full easie pace,  
And after hem came of women such a trace,  
That sens that God Adam had made of yerth,  
The third part of mankinde, or the ferth,  
Ne wende I nat by possibilite,  
Had ever in this wide world ybe,  
And true of love, these women were echon :  
Now, whether was that a wonder thing or non,  
That right anon, as that they gonne espye  
This floure, which that I clepe the daysie,  
Full sodainly they stinten all at ones,  
And kneled doune, as it were for the nones,  
And songen with o voice, " Heale and honour  
To trouth of womanhede, and to this flour,  
That beareth our alderprise in figuring,  
Her white croune beareth the witnessing."  
And with that word, a compas environ,  
They sitten hem ful softly adoun :  
First sat the god of love, and sith his quene,  
With the white croune, clad all in grene,  
And sithen al the remnaunt by and by,  
As they were of estate, full curtesly,  
Ne nat a worde was spoken in the place  
The mounenance of a furlong way of space.

I, kneeling by this floure, in good entent  
Abode to knowen what this people ment,  
As still as any stone, till, at the last,  
This god of love, on me his eyen cast,

And said, "Who kneleth there?" and I  
 answerde

Unto his asking, whan that I it herde,  
 And sayd, "Sir, it am I," and come him nere,  
 And salued him: quod he, "What doest thou  
 here

So nigh mine owne floure, so boldly?

It were better worthy truely,

A worme to nighen nere my floure than thou."

"And why sir," quod I, "and it like you?"  
 "For thou," quod he, "art thereto nothing able,

It is my relike, digne and delitable,

And thou my fo, and all my folke werriest,

And of mine old servaunts thou missaiest,

And hindrest hem with thy translation,

And lettest folke from hir devocion,

To serve me, and holdest it folie

To serve Love, thou mayst it nat denie,

For in plain text, withouten nede of glose,

Thou hast translated the Romaunt of the Rose,

That is an heresie ayenst my law,

And makest wise folke fro me withdraw;

And of Creseide, thou hast said as the list,

That maketh men to women lesse trist,

That ben as trewe as ever was any stele:

Of thine answer avise thee right wele,

For though thou renied hast my lay,

As other wretches have done many a day,

By seint Venus, that my mother is,

If that thou live, thou shalt repenten this,

So cruelly, that it shall well be sene."

Thou spake this lady, clothed all in greene,

And said, "God, right of your curtesie,

Ye mote herken if he can replie

Ayenst all this that ye have to him meved:

A God ne shulde nat be thus agreved,

But of his deite he shal be stable,  
 And there gracious and merciable :  
 And if ye n'ere a God that knowen all.  
 Than might it be as I you tellen shall,  
 This man to you may falsely ben accused,  
 That as by right him ought ben excused,  
 For in your court is many a losengeour,  
 And many a queinte tolover accusour,  
 That tabouren in your eares many a soun,  
 Right after hir imaginatioun,  
 To have your daliaunce, and for envie,  
 These ben the causes, and I shall nat lie,  
 Envie is lavender of the court alway,  
 For she ne parteth neither night ne day,  
 Out of the house of Cæsar, thus saith Dant,  
 Who so that goeth algate she wol nat want.

“ And eke, peraunter, for this man is nice,  
 He might done it, gessing no malice,  
 But for he useth thinges for to make,  
 Him recketh nought of what mater he take,  
 Or him was boden make thilke twey,  
 Of some persone, and durst it nat withsey :  
 Or him repenteth utterly of this,  
 He ne hath nat done so greuously amis,  
 To translaten that old clerkes writen,  
 As though that he of malice would enditen,  
 Dispite of Love, and had himself it wrought :  
 This shold a rightwise lord have in his thought,  
 And nat be like tiraunts of Lombardie,  
 That han no reward but at tyrannie,  
 For he that king or lorde is naturell,  
 Him ought nat be tiraunt ne cruell,  
 As is a fermour, to done the harme he can,  
 He must thinke it is his liege man,  
 And is his tresour, and his gold in cofer,  
 This is the sentence of the philosopher :

A king, to kepe his lieges in justice,  
Withouten doute that is his office,  
All woll he kepe his lordes in hir degree,  
As it is right and skil, that they bee  
Enhaunsed and honoured, and most dere,  
For they ben halfe goddes in this world here,  
Yet mote he done both right to poore and  
    riche,

All be that hir estate be nat both yliche,  
And have of poore folke compassion,  
For lo, the gentill kinde of the lion,  
For whan a flie offendeth him or biteth,  
He with his taile away the flie smiteth,  
Al easily, for of his gentrie,  
Ilim deineth nat to wreke him on a flie,  
As doeth a curre, or els another beest ;  
In noble corage ought ben areest,  
And waien every thing by equite,  
And ever have regard unto his owne degre :  
For, sir, it is no maistrie for a lord  
To dampne a man, without answere of word,  
And for a lorde, that is full foule to use ;  
And it so be, he may him nat excuse,  
But asketh mercy with a dreadfull herte,  
And profereth him, right in his bare sherte,  
To ben right at your owne judgement,  
Than ought a God by short avisement,  
Consider his owne honour, and his trespass,  
For sith no cause of death lieth in this case,  
You ought to ben the lightlier merciable,  
Letteth your ire, and bethe somewhat trefable :  
The man hath served you of his conninges,  
And forthred well your law in his makinges,  
All be it that he can nat well endite,  
Yet hath he made leude folke delite  
To serve you, in preising of your name,

He made the boke, that hight, the House of  
Fame,

And eke the Death of Blaunche the Duchesse,  
And the Parliament of Foules, as I gesse,  
And al the Love of Palamon and Arcite  
Of Thebes, though the storie is knowen lite,  
And many an himpne, for your holy daies,  
That highten Balades, Rondels, Virelaies;  
And for to speake of other holinesse,  
He hath in prose translated Boece,  
And made the Life also of Saint Cecile :  
He made also, gone is a great while,  
Origenes upon the Maudelaine :  
Him ought now to have the lesse paine,  
He hath made many a ley, and many a thing.

“Now as ye be a God, and eke a king,  
I your Alceste, whilom queene of Trace,  
I aske you this man right of your grace,  
That ye him never hurt in al his live,  
And he shal swearen to you, and that blive,  
He shal never more agilten in this wise,  
But shal maken as ye woll devise,  
Of women trewe in loving al hir life,  
Where so ye woll, of maiden or of wife,  
And forthren you as much as he misseide,  
Or in the Rose, or eles in Creseide.”

The god of love answerde her thus anon,  
“Madame,” quod he, “it is so long agon,  
That I you knew, so charitable and trewe,  
That never yet, sens the world was newe,  
To me ne found I better none than ye,  
If that I woll save my degree :  
I may nor woll nat werne your request,  
Al lieth in you, doth with him as you lest.

“I al foryeve withouten lenger space,  
For who so yeveth a yeste or doth a grace,

Do it betime, his thanke shall be the more ;  
And demeth ye what ye shal do therfore ?

“ Go thanke now my lady here,” quod he.  
I rose, and doun I set me on my knee,  
And said thus : “ Madame, the God above  
Foryelde you that the god of love  
Have maked me his wrath to foryeve,  
And grace so longe for to live,  
That I may know sothely what ye be,  
That have me holpen, and put in this degre :  
But trewly I wende, as in this caas  
Nought have a gilte, ne done to love trespas,  
For why ? a trewe man withouten drede  
Hath nat to parten with a theves dede.

“ Ne a trewe lover ought me nat to blame,  
Though that I speke a false lover some shame :  
They ought rather with me for to hold,  
For that I of Creseide wrote or told,  
Or of the Rose, what so mine author ment,  
Algate, God wotte, it was mine entent  
To forthren trowth in love, and it cherice,  
And to ben ware fro falsenesse and fro vice,  
By which ensample, this was my mening.”

And she answerde, “ Let be thine arguing,  
For love ne wol not counterpleted be,  
In right ne wrong, and lerne that of me :  
Thou hast thy grace, and hold the right thereto :  
Now woll I saine what penance thou shalt do  
For thy trespas, understand it here :  
Thou shalt while that thou livest, yere by yere,  
The most partie of thy time spende,  
In making of a glorious legende,  
Of good women, maidenés and wives,  
That weren trewe in loving all hir lives,  
And tell of false men that hem betraien,  
That al hir life ne do nat but assaien

How many women they may done a shame,  
 For in your world that is now hold a game :  
 And though thee like nat a lover be,  
 Speke wel of love, this penance yeve I thee,  
 And to the god of love I shal so pray,  
 That he shal charge his servaunts by any way,  
 To forthren thee, and wel thy labour quite,  
 Go now thy waie, this penaunce is but lite :  
 And whan this boke is made, yeve it the queene  
 On my behalfe, at Eltham, or at Shene."  
 The god of love gan smile, and than he said :  
 "Wost thou," quod he, "where this be wife or  
 maid,

Or queene, or countesse, or of what degree,  
 That hath so littell penaunce yeven thee,  
 That hast deserved sore for to smart,  
 But pite renneth sone in gentle herte :  
 That maist thou sene, she kitheth what she is."  
 And I answerde, "Naie, sir, so have I blis,  
 No more, but that I see well she is good."

"That is a trewe tale, by mine hood,"  
 Quod Love, "and thou knowest wel, parle,  
 If it be so that thou avise the :  
 Hast thou nat in a booke in thy cheste,  
 The great goodnesse of the queene Alceste,  
 That turned was into a dayesie,  
 She that for her husband chese to die,  
 And eke to gone to Hell, rather than he,  
 And Hercules rescued her, parde,  
 And brought her out of Hel againe to blis?"

And I answerde againe, and said "Yes,  
 Now know I her, and is this good Alceste,  
 The dayesie, and mine owne hertes reste?  
 Now fele I well the goodnesse of this wife,  
 That both after her death, and in her life,  
 Her great bounte doubleth her renoun,



Wel hath she quit me mine affectioun,  
That I have to her floure the dayesie,  
No wonder is though Jove her stellifie,  
As telleth Agaton, for her great goodnesse,  
Her white corowne beareth of it witsnesse :  
For all so many vertues had she,  
As smal florounes in her corowne be,  
In remembraunce of her, and in honour,  
Cibylla made the dayesie and the floure,  
Ycrowned al with white, as men may se,  
And Mars yave to her a corowne reed, parde,  
In stede of rubies set among the white :”  
Therewith this quene woxe red for shame  
alite,

Whan she was prayسد so in her presence,  
Than said Love, “ A full great negligence  
Was it to thee, that ilke time thou made,  
‘ Hide Absolon thy tresses,’ in balade,  
That thou forget in thy songe to sette,  
Sith that thou art so greatly in her dette,  
And wost well that kalender is she  
To any woman, that woll lover be :  
For she taught all the craft of trewe loving,  
And namely of wifehode the living,  
And all the bondes that she ought keepe ;  
Thy litel witte was thilke time asleepe :  
But now I charge thee upon thy life,  
That in thy legende thou make of this wif,  
Whan thou hast other smale ymade before :  
And fare now well, I charge thee no more,  
But er I go, thus much I will the tell,  
Ne shal no trewe lover come in Hell.

“ These other ladies sitting here a rowe,  
Ben in thy balade, if thou const hem know,  
And in thy bokes al thou shalt hem find,  
Have hem now in thy legende al in mind,

I meane of hem that ben in thy knowing,  
For here ben twenty thousand mo sitting  
Than thou knowest, good women all,  
And trewe of love, for ought that may befall :  
Make the metres of hem as thee lest,  
I mote gone home, the Sunne draweth west  
To Paradis, with all his companie,  
And serve alway the fresh dayesie. . . .

# The Canterbury Tales.

[ABOUT 1386.]



## THE PROLOGUE.

WHANNE that April with his shoures sote  
The droughte of March hath perced to the rote,  
And bathed every veine in swiche licour,  
Of whiche vertue engendred is the flour ;  
Whan Zephirus eke with his sote brethe  
Enspired hath in every holt and hethe  
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,  
And smale foules maken melodie,  
That slepen alle night with open eye,  
So priketh hem nature in hir corages ;  
Than longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,  
And palmeres for to seken strange strondes,  
To serve halwes couthe in sondry londes ;  
And specially, from every shires ende  
Of Englelond, to Canterbury they wende,  
The holy blisful martyr for to seke,  
That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.  
Befelle, that, in that seson on a day,  
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,  
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage  
To Canterbury with devoute corage,

At night was come into that hostelrie  
Wel nine and twenty in a compaignie  
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle  
In felawship, and pilgrimes were they alle,  
That toward Canterbury wolden ride.  
The chambres and the stables weren wide,  
And wel we weren esed atte beste.

And shortly, whan the sonne was gon to reste,  
So hadde I spoken with hem everich on,  
That I was of hir felawship anon,  
And made forword erly for to rise,  
To take oure way ther as I you devise.

But natheles, while I have time and space,  
Or that I forther in this tale pace,  
Me thinketh it accordant to reson,  
To tellen you alle the condition  
Of eche of hem, so as it semed me,  
And whiche they weren, and of what degre ;  
And eke in what araie that they were inne :  
And at a knight than wol I firste beginne.

A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,  
That fro the time that he firste began  
To riden out, he loved chevalrie,  
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curtesie.  
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,  
And therto hadde he ridden, no man ferre,  
As wel in Cristendom as in Hethenesse,  
And ever honoured for his worthinesse.

At Alisandre he was whan it was wonne.  
Ful often time he hadde the bord begonne  
Aboven alle nations in Pruce.  
In Lettowe hadde he reysed and in Ruce,  
No cristen man so ofte of his degre.  
In Gernade at the siege eke hadde he be  
Of Algesir, and ridden in Belmarie

At Leyes was he, and at Satalie,  
Whan they were wonne ; and in the Grete see  
At many a noble armee hadde he be.  
At mortal batailles hadde he ben fiftene,  
And foughten for our faith at Tramissene  
In listes thries, and ay slain his fo.

This ilke worthy knight hadde ben also  
Sometime with the lord of Palatie,  
Agen another hethen in Turkie :  
And evermore he hadde a sovereigne pris.  
And though that he was worthy he was wise,  
And of his port as meke as is a mayde.  
He never yet no vilanie ne sayde  
In alle his lif, unto no manere wight.  
He was a veray parfit gentil knight.

But for to tellen you of his araie,  
His hors was good, but he ne was not gaie.  
Of fustian he wered a gipon,  
Alle besmotred with his habergeon,  
For he was late ycome fro his viage,  
And wente for to don his pilgrimage.

With him ther was his sone a yonge SQUIER,  
A lover, and a lusty bachelor,  
With lockes crull as they were laide in presse.  
Of twenty yere of age he was I gesse.  
Of his stature he was of even lengthe,  
And wonderly deliver, and grete of strengthe.  
And he hadde be sometime in chevach e,  
In Flaundres, in Artois, and in Picardie,  
And borne him wel, as of so litel space,  
In hope to stonden in his ladies grace.

Embrouded was he, as it were a mede  
Alle ful of fresshe floures, white and rede.  
Singing he was, or floyting alle the day,  
He was as fresshe as is the moneth of May.

Short was his goune, with sleeves long and wide.  
Wel coude he sitte on hors, and fayre ride.  
He coude songes make, and wel endite,  
Juste and eke dance, and wel pourtraie and write.  
So hote he loved, that by nightertale  
He slep no more than doth the nightingale.  
Curteis he was, lowly, and servisable,  
And carf before his fader at the table.

A YEMAN hadde he, and servantes no mo  
At that time, for him luste to ride so ;  
And he was cladde in cote and hode of grene.  
A shewe of peacock arwes bright and kene  
Under his belt he bare ful thriftily.  
Wel coude he dresse his takel yemanly :  
His arwes drouped not with fetheres lowe.  
And in his hond he bare a mighty bowe.

A not-hed hadde he, with a broune visage.  
Of wood-craft coude he wel alle the usage.  
Upon his arme he bare a gaie bracer,  
And by his side a swerd and a bokeler,  
And on that other side a gaie daggere,  
Harneised wel, and sharpe as point of spere :  
A Cristofre on his brest of silver shene.  
An horne he bare, the baudrik was of grene.  
A forster was he sothely as I gesse.

Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,  
That of hire smiling was ful simple and coy ;  
Hire grettest othe n'as but by Seint Eloy ;  
And she was cleped madame Eglentine.  
Ful wel she sange the service devine,  
Entuned in hire nose ful swetely ;  
And Frenche she spake ful fayre and fetisly,  
After the scole of Stratford atte bowe,  
For Frenche of Paris was to hire unknowe.

At mete was she wel ytaughte withalle ;  
She lette no morsel from hire lippes falle,  
Ne wette hire fingres in hire sauce depe.  
Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe,  
Thatte no drope ne fell upon hire brest.  
In curtesie was sette ful moche hire lest.  
Hire over lippe wiped she so clene,  
That in hire cuppe was no ferthing sene  
Of grese, whan she dronken hadde hire draught.  
Ful semely after hire mete she raught.  
And sikerly she was of grete disport,  
And ful plesant, and amiable of port,  
And peined hire to contrefeten chere  
Of court, and ben estatelich of manere,  
And to ben holden digne of reverence.

But for to speken of hire conscience,  
She was so charitable and so pitous,  
She wolde wepe if that she saw a mous  
Caughte in a trappe, if it were ded or bledde.  
Of smale houndes hadde she, that she fedde  
With rosted flesh, and milk, and wastel brede,  
But sore wept she if on of hem were dede,  
Or if men smote it with a yerde smert :  
And all was conscience and tendre herte.

Ful semely hire wimple ypinched was ;  
Hire nose tretis ; hire eyen grey as glas ;  
Hire mouth ful smale, and therto soft and red ;  
But sikerly she hadde a fayre forehed.  
It was almost a spanne brode I trowe ;  
For hardily she was not undergrowe.

Ful fetise was hire cloke, as I was ware.  
Of smale corall aboute hire arm she bare  
A pair of bedes, gauded all with grene ;  
And theron heng a broche of gold ful shene,  
On whiche was first ywriten a crowned A,  
And after, *Amor vincit omnia*.

Another NONNE also with hire hadde she,  
That was hire chapelleine, and PREESTES thre.

A MONK ther was, a fayre for the maistrie,  
An out-rider, that loved venerie ;  
A manly man, to ben an abbot able.  
Ful many a deinte hors hadde he in stable :  
And whan he rode, men mighte his bridel here  
Gingeling in a whistling wind as clere,  
And eke as loude, as doth the chapell belle,  
Ther as this lord was keper of the celle.

The reule of saint Maure and of saint Beneit,  
Because that it was olde and somdele streit,  
This ilke monk lette olde thinges pace,  
And held after the newe world the trace.  
He yave not of the text a pulled hen,  
That saith, that hunters ben not holy men ;  
Ne that a monk, whan he is rekkeles,  
Is like to a fish that is waterles ;  
This is to say, a monk out of his cloistre.  
This ilke text held he not worth an oistre.  
And I say his opinion was good.  
What shulde he studie, and make himselven wood,  
Upon a book in cloistre alway to pore,  
Or swinken with his hondes, and laboure,  
As Austin bit ? how shal the world be served ?  
Let Austin have his swink to him reserved.  
Therefore he was a prickasoure a right :  
Greihoundes he hadde as swift as foul of flight :  
Of pricking and of hunting for the hare  
Was all his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.

I saw his sleeves purfled at the hond  
With gris, and that the finest of the lond.  
And for to fasten his hood under his chinne,  
He hadde of gold ywrought a curious pinne ;  
A love-knotte in the greter end ther was.



His hed was balled, and shone as any glas,  
And eke his face, as it hadde ben anoint.  
He was a lord ful fat and in good point.  
His eyen stepe, and rolling in his hed,  
That stemed as a forneis of a led.  
His botes souple, his hors in gret estat,  
Now certainly he was a fayre prelat.  
He was not pale as a forpined gost.  
A fat swan loved he best of any rost.  
His palfrey was as broune as is a bery.

A FRERE ther was, a wanton and a mery,  
A Limitour, a ful solempne man.  
In all the ordres foure is non that can  
So moche of daliance and fayre langage.  
He hadde ymade ful many a mariage  
Of yonge wimmen, at his owen cost.  
Until his ordre he was a noble post.  
Ful wel beloved, and familier was he  
With frankelains over all in his contree,  
And eke with worthy wimmen of the toun :  
For he had power of confession,  
As saide himselfe, more than a curat,  
For of his ordre he was licenciat,  
Ful swetely herde he confession,  
And plesant was his absolution.  
He was an esy man to give penance,  
Ther as he wiste to han a good pitance :  
For unto a poure ordre for to give  
Is signe that a man is wel yshrive.  
For if he gave, he dorste make avant,  
He wiste that a man was repentant.  
For many a man so hard is of his herte,  
He may not wepe although him sore smerte.  
Therefore in stede of weping and praieres,  
Men mote give silver to the poure freres.

His tippet was ay farsed ful of knives,  
And pinnes, for to given sayre wives.  
And certainly he hadde a mery note.  
Wel coude he singe and plaien on a rote.  
Of yeddinges he bare utterly the pris.  
His nekke was white as the flour de lis.  
Therto he strong was as a champioun,  
And knew wel the tavernes in every toun,  
And every hosteler and gay tapstere,  
Better than a lazar or a beggere,  
For unto swiche a worthy man as he  
Accordeth nought, as by his faculte,  
To haven with sike lazars acquaintance.  
It is not honest, it may not avance,  
As for to delen with no swiche pouraille,  
But all with riche, and sellers of vitaille.  
And over all, ther as profit shuld arise,  
Curteis he was, and lowly of servise.  
Ther n'as no man nowher so vertuous.  
He was the beste begger in all his hous :  
And gave a certaine ferme for the grant,  
Non of his bretheren came in his haunt.  
For though a widewe hadde but a sou,  
(So plesant was his *In principio*)  
Yet wold he have a ferthing or he went.  
His pourchas was wel better than his rent.  
And rage he coude as it hadde ben a whelp,  
In lovedayes, ther coude he mochel help.  
For ther was he nat like a cloisterere,  
With thredbare cope, as is a poure scolerc,  
But he was like a maister or a pope.  
Of double worsted was his semicope,  
That round was as a belle out of the presse.  
Somwhat he lisped for his wantonnesse,  
To make his English swete upon his tonge ;  
And in his harping, whan that he hadde songe,

His eyen twinkled in his hed aright,  
As don the sterres in a frosty night.  
This worthy limitour was cleped Huberd.

A MARCHANT was ther with a forked berd,  
In mottelee, and highe on hors he sat,  
And on his hed a Flaundrish bever hat.  
His botes clapsed sayre and fetisly.  
His resons spake he ful solempnely,  
Souning alway the encrease of his winning.  
He wold the see were kept for any thing  
Betwixen Middleburgh and Orewell.  
Wel coud he in eschanges sheldes selle.  
This worthy man ful wel his wit besette ;  
Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,  
So stedefastly didde he his governance,  
With his bargeines, and with his chevisance.  
Forsothe he was a worthy man withalle,  
But soth to sayn, I n'ot how men him calle.

A CLERK ther was of Oxenforde also,  
That unto logike hadde long ygo.  
As lene was his hors as is a rake,  
And he was not fat, I undertake ;  
But loked holwe, and therto soberly.  
Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,  
For he hadde geten him yet no benefice,  
Ne was nought worldly to have an office.  
For him was lever han at his beddes hed  
A twenty bokes, clothed in black or red,  
Of Aristotle, and his philosophie,  
Than robes riche, or fidel, or sautrie,  
But all be that he was a philosophre,  
Yet had he but litel gold in cofre,  
But all that he might of his frendes hente,  
On bokes and on lerning he it spente,

And besily gan for the soules praie  
Of hem, that yave him wherwith to scolaie.  
Of studie toke he moste cure and hede.  
Not a word spake he more than was nede ;  
And that was said in forme and reverence,  
And short and quike, and ful of high sentence.  
Souning in moral vertue was his speche,  
And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE ware and wise,  
That often hadde yben at the paruis,  
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.  
Discrete he was, and of gret reverence :  
He semed swiche, his wordes were so wise,  
Justice he was ful often in assise,  
By patent, and by pleine commissioun ;  
For his science, and for his high renoun,  
Of fees and robes had he many on.  
So grete a pourchasour was nowher non.  
All was fee simple to him in effect,  
His pourchasing might not ben in suspect.  
Nowher so besy a man as he ther n'as,  
And yet he semed besier than he was.  
In termes hadde he cas and domes alle,  
That fro the time of king Will. weren falle.  
Ther to he coude endite, and make a thing,  
Ther coude no wight pinche at his writing.  
And every statute coude he plaine by rote.  
He rode but homely in a medlee cote,  
Girt with a seint of silk, with barres smale ;  
Of his array tell I no lenger tale.

A FRANKLEIN was in this compaignie ;  
White was his berd, as is the dayesie.  
Of his complexion he was sanguin.  
Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in win.

To liven in delit was ever his wone,  
For he was Epicures owen sone,  
That held opinion, that plein delit  
Was veraily felicite parfite.  
An housholder, and that a grete was he ;  
Seint Julian he was in his contree.  
His brede, his ale, was alway after on ;  
A better envyned man was no wher non.  
Withouten bake mete never was his hous,  
Of fish and flesh, and that so plenteous,  
It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke,  
Of alle deintees that men coud of thinke,  
After the sondry sesons of the yere,  
So changed he his mete and his soupere.  
Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in mewe,  
And many a breme, and many a luce in stewe.  
Wo was his coke, but if his sauce were  
Poinant and sharpe, and redy all his gere.  
His table dormant in his halle alway  
Stode redy covered alle the longe'day.  
At sessions ther was he lord and sire.  
Ful often time he was knight of the shire.  
An anelace and a gipciere all of silk,  
Heng at his girdel, white as morwe milk,  
A shereve hadde he ben, and a countour.  
Was no wher swiche a worthy vavasour.

AN HABERDASHER, and a CARPENTER,  
A WEBBE, a DEYER, and a TAPISER,  
Were alle yclothed in o livere,  
Of a solempne and grete fraternite.  
Ful fresh and newe hir gere ypiked was.  
Hir knives were ychaped not with bras,  
But all with silver wrought ful clene and wel,  
Hir girdeles and hir pouches every del.  
Wel semed eche of hem a fayre burgeis,

To sitten in a gild halle, on the deis.  
Everich, for the wisdom that he can,  
Was shapelich for to ben an alderman.  
For catel hadden they ynough and rent,  
And eke hir wives wolde it wel assent :  
And elles certainly they were to blame.  
It is full fayre to ben ycleped madame,  
And for to gon to vigiles all before,  
And have a mantel reallich ybore.

A COKE they hadden with hem for the nones.  
To boile the chikenes and the marie bones,  
And poudre marchant, tart and galingale.  
Wel coude he knowe a draught of London ale.  
He coude roste, and sethe, and broile, and frie,  
Maken mortrewes, and wel bake a pie.  
But gret harm was it, as it thoughte me,  
That on his shinne a mormal hadde he.  
For blanc manger that made he with the best.

A SHIPMAN was ther, woned fer by West :  
For ought I wote, he was of Dertemouth.  
He rode upon a rouncie, as he couthe,  
All in a goune of falding to the knee.  
A dagger hanging by a las hadde hee  
About his nekke under his arm adoun.  
The hote sommer hadde made his hewe al broun.  
And certainly he was a good felaw.  
Ful many a draught of win he hadde draw  
From Burdeux ward, while that the chapman  
slepe.

Of nice conscience toke he no kepe.  
If that he faught, and hadde the higher hand,  
By water he sent hem home to every land.  
But of his craft to reken wel his tides,  
His stremes and his strandes him besides,

His herberwe, his mone, and his lodemanage,  
There was non swiche, from Hull unto Cartage.  
Hardy he was, and wise, I undertake :  
With many a tempest hadde his berd be shake.  
He knew wel alle the havens, as they were,  
Fro Gotland, to the Cape de finistere,  
And every creke in Bretagne and in Spaine :  
His barge ycleped was the Magdelaine.

With us ther was a DOCTOUR OF PHISIKE,  
In all this world ne was ther non him like  
To speke of phisike, and of surgerie :  
For he was grounded in astronomie.  
He kept his patient a ful gret del  
In houres by his magike naturel.  
Wel coude he fortunen the ascendent  
Of his images for his patient.

He knew the cause of every maladie,  
Were it of cold, or hote, or moist, or drie,  
And wher engendred, and of what humour,  
He was a veray parfite practisour.  
The cause yknowe, and of his harm the rote,  
Anon he gave to the sike man his bote.  
Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries  
To send him dragges, and his lettuaries,  
For eche of hem made other for to winne :  
Hir frendship n'as not newe to beginne  
Wel knew he the old Esculapius,  
And Dioscorides, and eke Rufus ;  
Old Hippocras, Hali, and Gallien ;  
Serapion, Rasis, and Avicen ;  
Averrois, Damascene, and Constantin ;  
Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertin.  
Of his diete mesurable was he,  
For it was of no superfluitee,  
But of gret nourishing, and digestible.

His studie was but litel on the Bible.  
In sanguin and in perse he clad was alle  
Lined with taffata, and with sendalle.  
And yet he was but esy of dispence :  
He kepte that he wan in the pestilence.  
For gold in phisike is a cordial ;  
Therefore he loved gold in special.

A good WIF was ther OF beside BATHE,  
But she was som del defe, and that was scathe.  
Of cloth making she hadde swiche an haunt,  
She passed hem of Ipres, and of Gaunt.  
In all the parish wif ne was ther non,  
That to the offring before hire shulde gon,  
And if ther did, certain so wroth was she,  
That she was out of alle charitee.  
Hire coverchiefs weren ful fine of ground ;  
I dorste swere, they weyeden a pound ;  
That on the Sunday were upon hire hede.  
Hire hosen weren of fine scarlet rede,  
Ful streite yteyed, and shoon ful moist and newe.  
Bold was hire face, and fayre and rede of hew.  
She was a worthy woman all hire live,  
Housbondes at the chirche dore had she had five,  
Withouten other compaignie in youthe.  
But thereof nedeth not to speke as nouthe.  
And thries hadde she ben at Jerusaleme.  
She hadde passed many a strange streme.  
At Rome she hadde ben, and at Boloine,  
In Galice at Seint James, and at Coloine.  
She coude moche of wandring by the way.  
Gat-tothed was she, sothly for to say.  
Upon an ambler esily she sat,  
Ywimpled wel, and on hire hede an hat,  
As brode as is a bokeler, or a targe.  
A fote-mantel about hire hippes large,



And on hire fete a pair of sporres sharpe.  
In felawship wel coude she laughe and carpe  
Of remedies of love she knew perchance,  
For of that arte she coude the olde dance.

A good man ther was of religioun,  
That was a poure PERSONE of a toun :  
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.  
He was also a lerned man, a clerk,  
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche.  
His parishens devoutly wolde he teche.  
Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,  
And in adversite ful patient :  
And swiche he was ypreved often sithes.  
Ful loth were him to cursen for his tithes,  
But rather wolde he yeven out of doute,  
Unto his poure parishens aboute,  
Of his offring, and eke of his substance.  
He coude in litel thing have suffisance.  
Wide was his parish, and houses fer asonder,  
But he ne left nought for no rain ne thonder,  
In sickenesse and in mischief to visite  
The ferrest in his parish, moche and lite,  
Upon his fete, and in his hand a staf.  
This noble ensample to his shepe he yaf,  
That first he wrought, and afterward he taught.  
Out of the gospel he the wordes caught,  
And this figure he added yet therto,  
That if gold ruste, what shuld iren do ?  
For if a preest be foule, on whom we trust,  
No wonder is a lewed man to rust :  
And shame it is, if that a preest take kepe ;  
To see a shitten shepherd, and clene shepe :  
Wel ought a preest ensample for to yeve,  
By his clenenesse, how his shepe shulde live.  
He set not his benefice to hire,

And lette his shepe acombred in the mire,  
And ran unto London, unto Seint Poules,  
To seken him a chanterie for soules,  
Or with a brotherhede to be withold :  
But dwelt at home, and kepte wel his fold,  
So that the wolf ne made it not miscarie.  
He was a shepherd, and no mercenarie.  
And though he holy were, and vertuous,  
He was to sinful men not dispitous,  
Ne of his speche dangerous ne digne,  
But his teching discrete and benigne.  
To drawen folk to heaven, with fairenesse,  
By good ensample, was his besinesse ;  
But it were any persone obstinat,  
What so he were of highe, or low estat,  
Him wolde he snibben sharply for the nones.  
A better preest I trowe that nowher non is.  
He waited after no pompe ne reverence,  
Ne maked him no spiced conscience,  
But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,  
He taught, but first he folwed it himselve.

With him ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,  
That hadde ylaid of dong ful many a fother.  
A trewe swinker, and a good was he,  
Living in pees, and parfite charitee.  
God loved he beste with alle his herte  
At alle times, were it gain or smerte,  
And than his neighebour right as himselve.  
He wolde thresh, and therto dike, and delve,  
For Cristes sake, for every poure wight,  
Withouten hire, if it lay in his might.

His tithes paied he ful sayre and wel  
Both of his propre swinke, and his catel.  
In a tabard he rode upon a mere.

Ther was also a reve, and a millere,

A sompnour, and a pardonor also,  
A manciple, and myself, ther n'ere no mo.

The MILLER was a stout carl for the nones,  
Ful bigge he was of braun, and eke of bones ;  
That proved wel, for over all ther he came,  
At wrastling he wold bere away the ram.  
He was short shuldered brode, a thikke gnarre,  
Ther n'as no dore, that he n'olde heve of barre,  
Or breke it at a renning with his hede.  
His berd as any sowe or fox was rede,  
And therto brode, as though it were a spade.  
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade  
A wert, and theron stode a tufte of heres,  
Rede as the bristles of a sowes eres.  
His nose-thirles blacke were and wide.  
A swerd and bokeler bare he by his side.  
His mouth as wide was as a forneis.  
He was a jangler, and a goliardeis,  
And that was most of sinne, and harlotries.  
Wel coude he stelen corne, and tollen thries.  
And yet he had a thomb of gold parde.  
A white cote and a blew hode wered he.  
A baggepipe wel coude he blowe and soun,  
And therwithall he brought us out of toune.

A gentil MANCIPLE was ther of a temple,  
Of which achatours mighten take ensemble  
For to ben wise in bying of vitaille.  
For whether that be paide, or toke by taille,  
Algate he waited so in his achate,  
That he was ay before in good estate.  
Now is not that of God a ful fayre grace,  
That swiche a lewed mannes wit shal pace  
The wisdom of an hepe of lered men ?  
Of maisters had he mo than thries ten,

That were of lawe expert and curious :  
Of which ther was a dosein in that hous,  
Worthy to ben stewardes of rent and lond  
Of any lord that is in Englelond,  
To maken him live by his propre good,  
In honour detteles, but if he were wood,  
Or live as scarsly, as him list desire ;  
And able for to helpen all a shire  
In any cas that mighte fallen or happe ;  
And yet this manciple sette hir aller cappe.

The REVE was a slendre colerike man,  
His berd was shave as neighe as ever he can.  
His here was by his eres round yshorne.  
His top was docked like a preest beforne.  
Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,  
Ylike a staff, there was no calf ysene.  
Wel coude he kepe a garner and a binne :  
Ther was non auditour coude on him winne.  
Wel wiste he by the drought, and by the rain,  
The yelding of his seed, and of his grain.  
His lordes shepe, his nete, and his deirie,  
His swine, his hors, his store, and his pultrie,  
Were holly in this reves governing.  
And by his covenant yave he rekening,  
Sin that his lord was twenty yere of age ;  
Ther coude no man bring him in arerage.  
Ther n'as baillif, ne herde, ne other hine,  
That he ne knew his sleight and his covine :  
They were adradde of him, as of the deth.  
His wonning was ful sayre upon an heth,  
With green trees yshadewed was his place.  
He coude better than his lord pourchace.  
Ful riche he was ystored privily.  
His lord wel coude he plesen subtilly,  
To yeve and lene him of his owen good,

And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.  
In youthe he lerned hadde a good mistere.  
He was a wel good wright, a carpentere.  
This reve sate upon a right good stot,  
That was all pomelee grey, and highte Scot.  
A long surcote of perse upon he hade,  
And by his side he bare a rusty blade.  
Of Norfolk was this reve, of which I tell,  
Beside a toun, men clepen Baldeswell.  
Tucked he was, as is a frere, aboute,  
And ever he rode the hinderest of the route.

A SOMPNOUR was ther with us in that place,  
That hadde a fire-red cherubennes face,  
For sausefleme he was, with eyen narwe.  
As hote he was, and likerous as a sparwe,  
With scalled browes blake, and pilled berd :  
Of his visage children were sore aferd.  
Ther n'as quiksilver, litarge, ne brimston,  
Boras, ceruse, ne oile of tartre non,  
Ne oinement that wolde clense or bite,  
That him might helpen of his whelkes white,  
Ne of the knobbes sitting on his chekes.  
Wel loved he garlike, onions, and lekes,  
And for to drinke strong win as rede as blood.  
Than wolde he speke, and crie as he were wood.  
And whan that he wel dronken had the win,  
Then wold he speken no word but Latin.  
A fewe termes coude he, two or three,  
That he had lerned out of som decree ;  
No wonder is, he herd it all the day.  
And eke ye knowen wel, how that a jay  
Can clepen watte, as well as can the pope.  
But who so wolde in other thing him grope,  
Than hadde he spent all his philosophie,  
Ay, *Questio quid juris*, wolde he crie.

He was a gentil harlot and a kind ;  
A better felaw shulde a man not find.  
He wolde suffre for a quart of wine,  
A good felaw to have his concubine  
A twelve month, and excuse him at the full.  
Ful prively a finch eke coude he pull.  
And if he found owhere a good felawe,  
He wolde techen him to have non awe  
In swiche a cas of the archedekenes curse ;  
But if a mannes soule were in his purse ;  
For in his purse he shulde ypunished be.  
Purse is the archedekens helle, said he.  
But wel I wote, he lied right in dede :  
Of cursing ought eche gilty man him drede.  
For curse wol sle right as assoiling saveth,  
And also ware him of a *significavit*.

In danger hadde he at his owen gise  
The yonge girles of the diocise,  
And knew hir conseil, and was of hir rede.  
A gerlond hadde he sette upon his hede,  
As gret as it were for an alestake :  
A bokeler hadde he made him of a cake.

With him ther rode a gentil PARDONERE  
Of Rouncevall, his frend and his compere,  
That streit was comen from the court of Rome,  
Ful loude he sang, Come hither, love, to me.  
This sompnour bare to him a stiff burdoun,  
Was never trompe of half so gret a soun.  
This pardoner had here as yelwe as wax,  
But smoth it heng, as doth a strike of flax :  
By unces heng his lokkes that he hadde,  
And therwith he his shulders overspradde.  
Ful thinne it lay, by culpons on and on,  
But hode, for jolite, ne wered he non,  
For it was trussed up in his wallet

Him thought he rode al of the newe get,  
Dishevele, sauf his cappe, he rode all bare.  
Swiche glaring eyen hadde he, as an hare.  
A vernicle hadde he sewed upon his cappe.  
His wallet lay beforne him in his lappe,  
Bret-ful of pardon come from Rome al hote.  
A vois he hadde, as smale as hath a gote.  
No berd hadde he, ne never non shulde have,  
As smothe it was as it were newe shave ;  
I trowe he were a gelding or a mare.

But of his craft, fro Berwike unto Ware,  
Ne was ther swiche an other pardonere.  
For in his male he hadde a pilwebere,  
Which, as he saide, was oure ladies veil :  
He saide, he hadde a gobbet of the seyl.  
Thatte seint Peter had, whan that he went  
Upon the see, till Jesu Crist him hent.  
He had a crois of laton ful of stones,  
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.  
But with these relikes, whanne that he fond  
A poure persone dwelling up on lond,  
Upon a day he gat him more moneie  
Than that the persone gat in monethes tweie.  
And thus with fained flattering and japes,  
He made the persone, and the peple, his apes.

But trewly to tellen atte last,  
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiast.  
Wel coude he rede a lesson or a storie,  
But alderbest he sang an offertorie :  
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,  
He must preche, and wel afile his tonge,  
To winne silver, as he right wel coude :  
Therefore he sang the merier and loude.

Now have I told you shortly in a clause,  
Th' estat, th' araie, the nombre, and eke the cause

Why that assembled was this compaignie  
In Southwerk at this gentil hostelrie,  
That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.  
But now is time to you for to telle,  
How that we baren us that ilke night,  
Whan we were in that hostelrie alight.  
And after wol I telle of our viage,  
And all the remenant of our pilgrimage.

But firste I praie you of your curtesie,  
That ye ne arette it not my vilanie,  
Though that I plainly speke in this matere,  
To tellen you hir wordes and hir chere ;  
Ne though I speke hir wordes proprely.  
For this ye knowen al so wel as I,  
Who so shall telle a tale after a man,  
He moste reherse, as neighe as ever he can,  
Everich word, if it be in his charge,  
All speke he never so rudely and so large ;  
Or elles he moste tellen his tale untrewre,  
Or feinen thinges, or finden wordes newe.  
He may not spare, although he were his brother.  
He moste as wel sayn o word, as an other.  
Crist spake himself ful brode in holy writ,  
And wel ye wote no vilanie is it.  
Eke Plato sayeth, who so can him rede,  
The wordes moste ben cosin to the dede.

Also I praie you to forgive it me,  
And have I not sette folk in hir degree,  
Here in this tale, as that they shulden stonde.  
My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.

Gret chere made oure hoste us everich on,  
And to the souper sette he us anon :  
And served us with vitaille of the beste.  
Strong was the win, and wel to drinke us leste.  
A semely man our hoste was with alle



For to han ben a marshal in an halle.  
A large man he was with eyen stepe,  
A fairer burgeis is ther non in Chepe :  
Bold of his speche, and wise and wel ytaught,  
And of manhood him lacked righte naught.  
Eke thereto was he right a mery man,  
And after souper plaien he began,  
And spake of mirthe amonges other thinges,  
Whan that we hadden made our rekeninges ;  
And saide thus ; Now, lordinges, trewely  
Ye ben to me welcome right hertily :  
For by my trouthe, if that I shal not lie,  
I saw nat this yere swiche a compaignie  
At ones in this herberwe, as is now.  
Fayn wolde I do you mirthe, and I wiste how,  
And of a mirthe I am right now bethought,  
To don you ese, and it shall coste you nought.  
Ye gon to Canterbury ; God you spede,  
The blisful martyr quite you your mede ;  
And wel I wot, as ye gon by the way,  
Ye shapen you to talken and to play :  
For trewely comfort ne mirthe is non,  
To riden by the way dombe as the ston :  
And therfore wold I maken you disport,  
As I said erst, and don you some comfort.  
And if you liketh alle by on assent :  
Now for to stonden at my jugement :  
And for to werchen as I shal you say  
To-morwe, whan ye riden on the way,  
Now by my faders soule that is ded,  
But ye be mery, smiteth of my hed.  
Hold up your hondes withouten more speche.  
Our conseil was not longe for to seche :  
Us thought it was not worth to make it wise,  
And granted him withouten more avise,  
And bad him say his verdit, as him leste.

Lordinges, (quod he) now herkeneth for the beste;  
But take it nat, I pray you, in disdain;  
This is the point, to speke it plat and plain,  
That eche of you to shorten with youre way,  
In this viage, shal tellen tales tway,  
To Canterbury ward, I mene it so,  
And homeward he shall tellen other two,  
Of adventures that whilom han befallē.  
And which of you that bereth him best of alle,  
That is to sayn, that telleth in this cas  
Tales of best sentence and most solas,  
Shal have a souper at youre aller cost  
Here in this place sitting by this post,  
Whan that ye comen agen from Canterbury.  
And for to maken you the more mery,  
I wol myselven gladly with you ride,  
Right at min owen cost, and be your gide.  
And who that wol my jugement withsay,  
Shal pay for alle we spenden by the way.  
And if ye vouchesauf that it be so,  
Telle me anon withouten wordes mo,  
And I wol erly shapen me therfore.

This thing was granted, and our othes swore  
With ful glad herte, and praiden him also,  
That he wold vouchesauf for to don so,  
And that he wolde ben our governour,  
And of our tales juge and reportour,  
And sette a souper at a certain pris;  
And we wol reuled ben at his devise,  
In highe and lowe: and thus by on assent,  
We ben accorded to his jugement.  
And therupon the win was fette anon.  
We dronken, and to reste wenten eche on,  
Withouten any lenger taryng.

A-morwe whan the day began to spring,  
Up rose our hoste, and was our aller cok,

And gaderd us togeder in a flok,  
And forth we riden a litel more than pas,  
Unto the watering of Seint Thomas :  
And ther our hoste began his hors arest,  
And saide ; lordes, herkeneth if you lest.  
Ye wete your forword, and I it record.  
If even-song and morwe-song accord,  
Let se now who shal telle the first tale.  
As ever mote I drinken win or ale,  
Who so is rebel to my jugement,  
Shal pay for alle that by the way is spent.  
Now draweth cutte, or that ye forther twinne.  
He which that hath the shortest shal beginne.

Sire knight, (quod he) my maister and my lord,  
Now draweth cutte, for that is min accord.  
Cometh nere, (quod he) my lady prioresse,  
And ye, sire clerk, let be your shamesfastnesse,  
Ne studieth nought ; lay hand to, every man.

Anon to drawen every wight began,  
And shortly for to tellen as it was,  
Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,  
The sothe is this, the cutte felle on the knight,  
Of which ful blith and glad was every wight ;  
And tell he must his tale as was reson,  
But forword, and by composition,  
As ye han herd ; what nedeth wordes mo ?  
And whan this good man saw that it was so,  
As he that wise was and obedient  
To kepe his forword by his free assent,  
He saide ; sithen I shal begin this game,  
What ? welcome be the cutte a goddes name.  
Now let us ride, and herkeneth what I say.

And with that word we riden forth our way ;  
And he began with right a mery chere  
His tale anon, and saide as ye shul here.

**THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.**

O SCATHFUL harm, condition of poverte,  
With thirst, with cold, with hunger so confounded,  
To asken helpe thee shameth in thin herte,  
If thou non ask, so sore art thou ywounded,  
That veray nede unwrappeth al thy wound hid.  
Maugre thin hed thou must for indigence  
Or stele, or begge, or borwe thy dispence.

Thou blamest Crist, and sayst ful bitterly,  
He misdeparteth richesse temporal;  
Thy neighebour thou witest sinfully,  
And sayst, thou hast a litel, and he hath all:  
Parfay (sayst thou) sometime he reken shall,  
Whan that his tayl shal brennen in the glede,  
For he nought helpeth needful in hir nede.

Herken what is the sentence of the wise,  
Bet is to dien than have indigence.  
Thy selve neighebour wol thee despise,  
If thou be poure, farewel thy reverence.  
Yet of the wise man take this sentence,  
Alle the dayes of poure men ben wicke,  
Beware therfore or thou come to that pricke.

If thou be poure, thy brother hateth thee,  
And all thy frendes fleen fro thee, alas!  
O riche marchants, ful of wele ben ye,  
O noble, o prudent folk, as in this cas,  
Your bagges ben not filled with ambes as,  
But with sis cink, that renneth for your chance;  
At Cristenmasse mery may ye dance.

Ye seken lond and see for your winniges,  
As wise folk ye knowen all th'estat  
Of regnes, ye ben fathers of tidinges,  
And tales, both of pees and of debat :  
I were right now of tales desolat,  
N'ere that a marchant, gon in many a yere,  
Me taught a tale, which that ye shull here.

IN SURRIE whilom dwelt a compaignie  
Of chapmen rich, and therto sad and trewe,  
That wide where senten hir spicerie,  
Clothes of gold, and satins riche of hewe.  
Hir chaffare was so thriftly and so newe,  
That every wight hath deintee to chaffare  
With hem, and eke to sellen hem hir ware.

Now fell it, that the maisters of that sort  
Han shapen hem to Rome for to wende,  
Were it for chapmanhood or for disport,  
Non other message wold they thider sende,  
But comen hemself to Rome, this is the ende :  
And in swiche place as thought hem advantage  
For hir entente, they taken hir herbergage.

Sojourned han these marchants in that toun  
A certain time, as fell to hir plesance :  
And so befell, that the excellent renoun  
Of the emperoures daughter dame Custance  
Reported was, with every circumstance,  
Unto these Surrien marchants, in swiche wise  
Fro day to day, as I shal you devise.

This was the comun vois of every man :  
Our emperour of Rome, God him se,  
A daughter hath, that sin the world began,  
To reken as wel hire goodnesse as beaute,

N'as never swiche another as is she :  
I pray to God in honour hire sustene,  
And wold she were of all Europe the quene.

In hire is high beaute withouten pride,  
Youthe, withouten grened or folie :  
To all hire werkes vertue is hire guide ;  
Humblesse hath slaien in hire tyrannie :  
She is mirrour of alle curtesie,  
Hire herte is veray chambre of holinesse,  
Hire hond ministre of fredom for almesse.

And al this vois was soth, as God is trewe,  
But now to purpos let us turne agein.  
These marchants han don fraught hir shippes newe,  
And whan they han this blisful maiden sein,  
Home to Surrie ben they went ful fayn,  
And don hir nedes, as they han don yore,  
And liven in wele, I can say you no more.

Now fell it, that these marchants stood in grace  
Of him that was the Soudan of Surrie :  
For whan they came from any strange place  
He wold of his benigne curtesie  
Make hem good chere, and besily espie  
Tidings of sundry regnes, for to lere  
The wonders that they mighte seen or here.

Amonges other thinges specially  
These marchants han him told of dame Custance  
So gret noblesse, in earnest seriously,  
That this Soudan hath caught so gret pleasance  
To han hire figure in his remembrance,  
That all his lust, and all his besy cure  
Was for to love hire, while his lif may dure.

Paraventure in thilke large book,  
Which that men clepe the heven, ywriten was  
With sterres, whan that he his birthe took,  
That he for love shuld han his deth, alas !  
For in the sterres, clerer than is glas,  
Is writen, God wot, who so coud it rede,  
The deth of every man withouten drede.

In sterres many a winter therbeforn  
Was writ the deth of Hector, Achilles,  
Of Pompey, Julius, or they were born ;  
The strif of Thebes ; and of Hercules,  
Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates  
The deth ; but mennes wittes ben so dull,  
That no wight can wel rede it at the full.

This Soudan for his prive councel sent,  
And shortly of this matere for to pace,  
He hath to hem declared his entent,  
And sayd hem certain, but he might have grace  
To han Custance, within a litel space,  
He n'as but ded, and charged hem in hie  
To shapen for his lif som remedie.

Diverse men, diverse thinges saiden ;  
They argumentes casten up and doun ;  
Many a subtil reson forth they laiden ;  
They speken of magike, and abusion ;  
But finally, as in conclusion,  
They cannot seen in that non advantage,  
Ne in non other way, save mariage.

Than saw they therin swiche difficultee  
By way of reson, for to speke all plain,  
Because ther was swiche diversitee  
Betwene hir bothe lawes, that they sayn,

They trowen that no cristen prince wold fayn  
Wedden his child under our lawe swete,  
That us was yeven by Mahound our prophete.

And he answered : Rather than I lese  
Custance, I wol be cristened douteles ;  
I mote ben hires, I may non other chese,  
I pray you hold your arguments in pees,  
Saveth my lif, and beth not reccheles  
To getten hire that hath my lif in cure,  
For in this wo I may not long endure.

What nedeth greter dilatation?  
I say, by tretise and ambassatrie,  
And by the popes mediation,  
And all the chirche, and all the chevalrie,  
That in destruction of Maumetrie,  
And in encrese of Cristes lawe dere,  
They ben accorded so as ye may here ;

How that the Soudan and his baronage,  
And all his lieges shuld ycristened be,  
And he shal han Custance in mariage,  
And certain gold, I no't what quantitee,  
And hereto finden suffisant suretee.  
The same accord is sworne on eyther side ;  
Now, fair Custance, almighty God thee guide.

Now wolden som men waiten, as I gesse,  
That I shuld tellen all the purveiance,  
The which that the emperour of his noblesse  
Hath shapen for his doughter dame Custance.  
Wel may men know that so gret ordinance  
May no man tellen in a litel clause,  
As was arraied for so high a cause.



Bishopes ben shapen with hire for to wende,  
Lordes, ladies, and knightes of renoun,  
And other folk ynow, this is the end.  
And notified is thurghout al the toun,  
That every wight with gret devotioun  
Shuld prayen Crist, that he this mariage  
Receive in gree, and spede this viage.

The day is comen of hire departing,  
I say the woful day fatal is come,  
That ther may be no longer taryng,  
But forward they hem dresen all and some.  
Custance, that was with sorwe all overcome,  
Ful pale arist, and dresseth hire to wende,  
For wel she seth ther n'is non other ende

Alas ! what wonder is it though she wept ?  
That shal be sent to straunge nation  
From frendes, that so tendrely hire kept,  
And to be bounde under subjection  
Of on, she knoweth not his condition.  
Housbondes ben all good, and han ben yore,  
That knowen wives, I dare say no more.

Fader, (she said) thy wretched child Custance,  
Thy yonge doughter, fostered up so soft,  
And ye, my moder, my souveraine plesance  
Over all thing, (out taken Crist on loft)  
Custance your child hire recommendeth oft  
Unto your grace ; for I shal to Surrie,  
Ne shal I never seen you more with eyc.

Alas ! unto the Barbare nation  
I muste gon, sin that it is your will :  
But Crist, that starfe for our redemption,  
So yeve me grace his hestes to fulfill,

I wretched woman no force though I spill ;  
Women arn borne to thraldom and penance,  
And to ben under mannes governance.

I trow at Troye when Pirrus brake the wall,  
Or Ilion brent, or Thebes the citee,  
Ne at Rome for the harm thurgh Hanniball,  
That Romans hath venqueshed times three,  
N'as herd swiche tendre weping for pitee,  
As in the chambre was for hire parting,  
But forth she mote, wheder she wepe or sing.

O firste moving cruel firmament,  
With thy diurnal swegh that croudest ay,  
And hurtlest all from Est til Occident,  
That naturally wold hold another way ;  
Thy crouding set the heven in swiche array,  
At the beginning of this fierce viage,  
That cruel Mars hath slain this marriage.

Infortunat ascendent tortuous,  
Of which the lord is helpeles fall, alas !  
Out of his angle into the derkest hous.  
O Mars, o Atyzar, as in this cas ;  
O feble Mone, unhappy ben thy pas,  
Thou knittest thee ther thou art not received,  
Ther thou were wel fro thennes art thou weived.

Imprudent emperour of Rome, alas !  
Was ther no philosophre in al thy toun ?  
Is no time bet than other in swiche cas ?  
Of viage is ther non electioun,  
Namely to folk of high conditioun,  
Nat whan a rote is of a birth yknowe ?  
Alas ! we ben to lewed, or to slow.

To ship is brought this woful faire maid  
Solempnely, with every circumstance :  
Now Jesu Crist be with you all, she said.  
Ther n'is no more, but farewel fair Custance.  
She peineth hire to make good countenance,  
And forth I let hire sayle in this manere,  
And turne I wol againe to my matere.

The mother of the Soudan, well of vices,  
Espied hath hire sones pleine entente,  
How he wol lete his olde sacrifices :  
And right anon she for her conseil sente,  
And they ben comen, to know what she mente,  
And whan assembled was this folk in fere,  
She set hire down, and sayd as ye shul here.

Lordes, (she sayd) ye knowen everich on,  
How that my sone in point is for to lete  
The holy lawes of our Alkaron,  
Yeven by Goddes messenger Mahomete :  
But on avow to grete God I hete,  
The lif shal rather out of my body sterte,  
Than Mahometes lawe out of myn herte.

What shuld us tiden of this newe lawe  
But thraldom to our bodies and penance,  
And afterward in helle to ben drawe,  
For we reneied Mahound our creance ?  
But, lordes, wol ye maken assurance,  
As I shal say, assenting to my lore ?  
And I shal make us sauf for evermore.

They sworn, and assented every man  
To live with hire and die, and by hire stond :  
And everich on, in the best wise he can,  
To strengthen hire shal all his frendes fond.

And she hath this emprise ytaken in hond,  
Which ye shull heren that I shal devise,  
And to hem all she spake right in this wise.

We shul first feine us cristendom to take;  
Cold water shal not greve us but a lite :  
And I shal swiche a feste and revel make,  
That, as I trow, I shal the Soudan quite.  
For tho his wif be cristened never so white,  
She shal have nede to wash away the rede,  
Though she a font of water with hire lede.

O Soudannesse, rote of iniquitee,  
Virago thou Semyramee the second,  
O serpent under femininitee,  
Like to the serpent depe in helle ybound :  
O feined woman, all that may confound  
Vertue and innocence, thurgh thy malice,  
Is bred in thee, as nest of every vice.

O Sathan envious, sin thilke day  
That thou were chased from our heritage,  
Wel knowest thou to woman the olde way.  
Thou madest Eva bring us in servage,  
Thou walt fórdon this cristen mariage :  
Thin instrument so (wala wa the while !)  
Makest thou of women whan thou wolt begile.

This Soudannesse, whom I thus blame and warrie,  
Let prively hire conseil gon hir way :  
What shuld I in this tale longer tarie ?  
She rideth to the Soudan on a day,  
And sayd him, that she wold reneie hire lay,  
And cristendom of prestes hondes fong,  
Repenting hire she hethen was so long ;

Beseching him to don hire that honour,  
That she might han the cristen folk to fest :  
To plesen hem I wol do my labour,  
The Soudan saith, I wol don at your hest,  
And kneling, thanked hire of that request ;  
So glad he was, he n'iste not what to say,  
She kist hire sone, and home she goth hire way.

Arrived ben these cristen folk to londe  
In Surrie, with a gret solempne route,  
And hastily this Soudan sent his sonde,  
First to his mother, and all the regne aboute,  
And sayd, his wif was comen out of doute,  
And praide hem for to riden again the quene,  
The honour of his regne to sustene.

Gret was the presse, and riche was th'array  
Of Surriens and Romanes met in fere.  
The mother of the Soudan riche and gay  
Received hire with all so glad a chere,  
As any mother might hire doughter dere :  
And to the nexte citee ther beside  
A softe pas solempnely they ride.

Nought trow I, the triumph of Julius,  
Of which that Lucan maketh swiche a bost,  
Was realler, or more curious,  
Than was th'assemblee of this blisful host :  
Butte this scorpion, this wicked gost,  
The Soudannesse, for all hire flattering  
Cast under this ful mortally to sting.

The Soudan cometh himself sone after this  
So really, that wonder is to tell :  
And welcometh hire with alle joye and blis.  
And thus in mirth and joye I let him dwell.

The fruit of this matere is that I tell.  
Whan time came, men thought it for the best  
That revel stint, and men go to hir rest.

The time come is, this olde Soudannesse  
Ordeined hath the feste of which I tolde,  
And to the feste cristen folk hem dresse  
In general, ya bothe yonge and olde.  
Ther may men fest and realtee beholde,  
And deintees mo than I can you devise,  
But all to dere they bought it or they rise.

O soden wo, that ever art successour  
To worldly blis, spreint is with bitternesse  
Th' ende of the joye of our worldly labour :  
Wo occupieth the fyn of our gladnesse.  
Herken this conseil for thy sikernessee :  
Upon thy glade day have in thy minde  
The unaware wo of harm, that cometh behinde.

For shortly for to tellen at a word,  
The Soudan and the cristen everich on  
Ben all to-hewe, and stiked at the bord,  
But it were only dame Custance alone.  
This olde Soudannesse, this cursed crone,  
Hath with hire frendes don this cursed dede,  
For she hireself wold all the contree lede.

Ne ther was Surrien non that was converted,  
That of the conseil of the Soudan wot,  
That he n'as all to-hewe, er he asterted :  
And Custance han they taken anon fote-hot,  
And in a ship all stereles (God wot)  
They han hire set, and bidden hire lerne sayle  
Out of Surrie againward to Itaille.

A certain tresor that she thither ladde,  
And soth to sayn, vitaille gret plentee,  
They han hire yeven, and clothes eke she hadde,  
And forth she sayleth in the salte sea :  
O my Custance, ful of benignitee,  
O emperoures yonge doughter dere,  
He that is lord of fortune be thy stere.

She blesseth hire, and with ful pitous vois  
Unto the crois of Crist thus sayde she,  
O clere, o weleful auter, holy crois,  
Red of the lambes blood ful of pitee,  
That wesh the world fro the old iniquitee,  
Me fro the fende, and fro his clawes kepe,  
That day that I shal drenchen in the depe

Victorious tree protection of trewe,  
That only worthy were for to here  
The king of heven, with his woundes newe,  
The white lamb, that hurt was with a spere ;  
Flemer of fendes, out of him and here  
On which thy limmes faithfully extenden,  
Me kepe, and yeve me might my lif to amenden.

Yeres and dayes fleet this creature  
Thurghout the see of Greece, unto the straite  
Of Maroc, as it was hire aventure :  
On many a sory mele now may she baite,  
After hire deth ful often may she waite,  
Or that the wilde waves wol hire drive  
Unto the place ther as she shal arrive.

Men mighten asken, why she was not slain ?  
Eke at the feste who might hire body save ?  
And I answer to that demand again,  
Who saved Daniel in the horrible cave,

Ther every wight, save he, master or knave,  
Was with the leon frette, or he asterte?  
No wight but God, that he bare in his herte.

God list to shew his wonderful miracle  
In hire, for we shuld seen his mighty werkes :  
Crist, which that is to every harm triacle,  
By certain menes oft, as knowen clerkes,  
Doth thing for certain ende, that ful derke is  
To mannes wit, that for our ignorance  
Ne can nat know his prudent purveiance.

Now sith she was not at the feste yslawe,  
Who kepte hire fro the drenching in the see ?  
Who kepte Jonas in the fishes mawe,  
Till he was spouted up at Ninivee ?  
Wel may men know, it was no wight but he  
That kept the peple Ebraike fro drenching,  
With drye feet thurghout the see passing.

Who bade the foure spirits of tempest,  
That power han to anoyen lond aud see,  
Both north and south, and also west and est,  
Anoyen neyther see, ne lond, ne tree ?  
Sothly the commander of that was he  
That fro the tempest ay this woman kepte,  
As wel whan she awoke as whan she slepte.

Wher might this woman mete and drinke have ?  
Three yere and more, how lasteth hire vitaille ?  
Who fed the Egyptian Mary in the cave  
Or in desert ? no wight but Crist *sans faille*.  
Five thousand folk it was as gret marvaille  
With loaves five and fishes two to fede ;  
God sent his foyson at hire grete nede.



She driveth forth into our Ocean  
Thurghout our wide see, til at the last  
Under an hold, that nempnen I ne can,  
For in Northumberlond, the wave hire cast,  
And in the sand hire ship stiked so fast,  
That thennes wolde it not in all a tide :  
The wille of Crist was that she shulde abide.

The constable of the castle doun is fare  
To seen this wrecke, and al the ship he sought,  
And fond this wery woman ful of care ;  
He fond also the tresour that she brought :  
In hire langage mercy she besought,  
The lif out of hire body for to twinne,  
Hire to deliver of wo that she was inne.

A maner Latin corrupt was hire speche,  
But algate therby was she understonde.  
The constable, whan him list no lenger seche,  
This woful woman brought he to the londe.  
She kneleth doun, and thanketh Goddes sonde ;  
But what she was, she wolde no man seye  
For foule ne faire, though that she shulde deye.

She said, she was so mased in the see,  
That she forgate hire minde, by hire trouth.  
The constable hath of hir so gret pitee  
And eke his wif, that they wepen for routh :  
She was so diligent withouten slouth  
To serve and plesen everich in that place,  
That all hire love, that loken in hire face.

The constable and dame Hermegild his wif  
Were payenes, and that contree every wher ;  
But Hermegild loved Custance as hire lif ;  
And Custance hath so long sojourned ther

In orisons, with many a bitter tere,  
Til Jesu hath converted thurgh his grace  
Dame Hermegild, constablesse of that place.

In all that lond no cristen dorste route ;  
All cristen folk ben fled fro that contree  
Thurgh payenes, that conquereden all aboute  
The plages of the North by lond and see.  
To Wales fled the cristianitee  
Of olde Bretons, dwelling in this ile ;  
Ther was hir refuge for the mene while.

But yet n'ere cristen Bretons so exiled,  
That ther n'ere som which in hir privitee  
Honoured Crist, and hethen folk begiled ;  
And neigh the castle swiche ther dwelten three :  
That on of hem was blind, and might not see,  
But it were with thilke eyen of his minde,  
With which men mowen see whan they ben blinde.

Bright was the sonne, as in that sommers day,  
For which the constable and his wif also  
And Custance, han ytake the righte way  
Toward the see, a furlong way or two,  
To plaien, and to romen to and fro ;  
And in hir walk this blinde man they mette,  
Croked and olde, with eyen fast yshette.

In the name of Crist (cried this blinde Breton)  
Dame Hermegild, yeve me my sight again.  
This lady waxe afraied of that soun,  
Lest that hire husbond, shortly for to sain,  
Wold hire for Jesu Cristes love have slain,  
Till Custance made hire bold, and bad hire werche  
The will of Crist, as doughter of holy cherche.

The constable wexe abashed of that sight,  
And sayde ; What amounteth all this fare ?  
Custance answerd ; Sire, it is Cristes might,  
That helpeth folk out of the fendes snare ;  
And so ferforth she gan our lay declare,  
That she the constable, er that it were eve,  
Converted, and on Crist made him beleve.

This constable was not lord of the place  
Of which I speke, ther as he Custance fond,  
But kept it strongly many a winter space,  
Under Alla, king of Northumberlond,  
That was ful wise, and worthy of his hond  
Againe the Scottes, as men may wel here ;  
But tourne I wol againe to my matere.

Sathan, that ever us waiteth to begile,  
Saw of Custance all hire perfectioun,  
And cast anon how he might quite hire while,  
And made a yonge knight, that dwelt in that toun,  
Love hire so hote of foule affectioun,  
That veraily him thought that he shuld spille,  
But he of hire might ones han his wille.

He woeth hire, but it availeth nought,  
She wolde do no sinne by no wey :  
And for despit, he compassed his thought  
To maken hire on shameful deth to dey.  
He waiteth whan the constable is away,  
And prively upon a night he crepte  
In Hermegildes chambre while she slepte.

Wery, forwaked in hire orisons,  
Slepeth Custance, and Hermegilde also.  
This knight, thurgh Sathanas temptations,  
All softly is to the bed ygo,

And cut the throte of Hermegilde atwo,  
And layd the bloody knif by dame Custance,  
And went his way, ther God yeve him mischance.

Sone after cometh this constable home again,  
And eke Alla, that king was of that lond,  
And saw his wife despitously yslain,  
For which ful oft he wept and wrong his hond ;  
And in the bed the bloody knif he fond  
By dame Custance, alas ! what might she say ?  
For veray wo hire wit was all away.

To king Alla was told all this mischance,  
And eke the time, and wher, and in what wise,  
That in a ship was fonden this Custance,  
As here before ye han herd me devise :  
The kinges herte of pitee gan agrise,  
Whan he saw so benigne a creature  
Falle in disese and in misaventure.

For as the lamb toward his deth is brought,  
So stant this innocent befor the king :  
This false knight, that hath this treson wrought,  
Bereth hire in hond that she hath don this thing :  
But natheles ther was gret murmuring  
Among the peple, and sayn they cannot gesse  
That she had don so gret a wickednesse.

For they han seen hire ever so vertuous,  
And loving Hermegild right as hire lif :  
Of this bare witnesse everich in that hous,  
Save he that Hermegild slow with his knif :  
This gentil king hath caught a gret motif  
Of this witness, and thought he wold enquire  
Deper in this cas, trouthe for to lere.

Alas ! Custance, thou hast no champion,  
Ne fighten canst thou not, so wala wa !  
But he that starf for our redemption,  
And bond Sathan, and yet lith ther he lay,  
So be thy stronge champion this day :  
For but if Crist on thee miracle kithe,  
Withouten gilt thou shalt be slaine as swithe.

She set hire doun on knees, and thus she sayde ;  
Immortal God, that savedest Susanne  
Fro false blame, and thou merciful mayde,  
Mary I mene, doughter to seint Anne,  
Beforn whos child angels singen Osanne,  
If I be gilteles of this felonie,  
My socour be, or elles shal I die,

Have ye not seen sometime a pale face  
(Among a prees) of him that hath ben lad  
Toward his deth, wher as he geteth no grace,  
And swiche a colour in his face hath had,  
Men mighten know him that was so bestad,  
Amonges all the faces in that route,  
So stant Custance, and loketh hire aboute.

O quenes living in prosperitee,  
Duchesses, and ye ladies everich on,  
Haveth som routhe on hire adversitee ;  
An emperoures doughter stant alone ;  
She hath no wight to whom to make hire mone ;  
O blood real, that stondest in this drede,  
Fer ben thy frendes in thy grete nede.

This Alla king hath swiche compassioun,  
As gentil herte is fulfilled of pitee,  
That fro his eyen ran the water doun.  
Now hastily do fecche a book, quod he ;

And if this knight wol sweren, how that she  
This woman slow, yet wol we us avise,  
Whom that we wol that shal ben our justice.

A Breton book, written with Evangiles,  
Was fet, and on this book he swore anon  
She giltif was, and in the mene whiles  
An hond him smote upon the nekke bone,  
That doun he fell at ones as a stone :  
And both his eyen brost out of his face  
In sight of every body in that place.

A vois was herd, in general audience,  
That sayd ; Thou hast desclandred gilteles  
The doughter of holy chirche in high presence ;  
Thus hast thou don, and yet hold I my pees.  
Of this mervaille agast was all the prees,  
As mased folk they stonden everich on  
For drede of wreche, save Custance alone.

Gret was the drede and eke the repentance  
Of hem that hadden wronge suspicion  
Upon this sely innocent Custance ;  
And for this miracle, in conclusion,  
And by Custances mediation,  
The king, and many another in that place,  
Converted was, thanked be Cristes grace.

This false knight was slain for his untrouthe  
By jugement of Alla hastily ;  
And yet Custance had of his deth gret routhe ;  
And after this Jesus of his mercy  
Made Alla wedden ful solempnely  
This holy woman, that is so bright and shene,  
And thus hath Crist ymade Custance a quene.

But who was woful (if I shal not lie)  
Of this wedding but Donegild and no mo,  
The kinges mother, ful of tyrannie?  
Hire thoughte hire cursed herte brast atwo;  
She wolde not that hire sone had do so;  
Hire thoughte a despit, that he shulde take  
So strange a creature unto his make.

Me list not of the chaf ne of the stre  
Maken so long a tale, as of the corn.  
What shulde I tellen of the realtee  
Of this mariage, or which cours goth beforne,  
Who bloweth in a trompe or in an horn?  
The fruit of every tale is for to say;  
They ete and drinke, and dance, and sing, and play.

They gon to bed, as it was skill and right,  
For though that wives ben ful holy thinges,  
They mosten take in patience a night  
Swiche maner necessities, as ben plesinges  
To folk that han ywedded hem with ringes,  
And lay a lite hir holinesse aside  
As for the time, it may no bet betide.

On hire he gat a knave childe anon,  
And to a bishop, and his constable eke  
He toke his wif to kepe, whan he is gon  
To Scotland ward, his fomen for to seke.  
Now faire Custance, that is so humble and meke,  
So long is gon with childe til that still  
She halt hire chambre, abiding Cristes will.

The time is come, a knave child she bere:  
Mauricius at the fontstone they him calle.  
This constable doth forth come a messenger,  
And wrote unto his king that cleped was Alle,

How that this blisful tiding is befallē,  
And other tidings spedeful for to say.  
He hath the lettre, and forth he goth his way.

This messenger, to don his advantage,  
Unto the kinges mother rideth swithe,  
And salueth hire ful faire in his langage.  
Madame, quod he, ye may be glad and blithe,  
And thanken God an hundred thousand sithe;  
My lady quene hath child, withouten doute,  
To joye and blisse of all this regne aboute.

Lo here the lettre seled of this thing,  
That I most bere in all the hast I may:  
If ye wol ought unto your sone the king,  
I am your servant bothe night and day.  
Donegilde answerd, As now at this time nay;  
But here I wol all night thou take thy rest,  
To morwe wol I say thee what me lest.

This messenger drank sadly ale and wine,  
And stolen were his lettres prively  
Out of his box, while he slept as a swine;  
And contrefeted was ful subtilly  
Another lettre, wrought ful sinfully,  
Unto the kinge directe of this matere  
Fro his constable, as ye shal after here.

This lettre spake, the quene delivered was  
Of so horrible a fendliche creature,  
That in the castle non so hardy was  
That any while dorste therein endure:  
The mother was an elfe by aventure  
Ycome, by charmes or by sorcerie,  
And everich man hateth hire compaignie.



Wo was this king whan he this lettre had sein,  
But to no wight he told his sorwes sore,  
But of his owen hand he wrote again ;  
Welcome the sonde of Crist for evermore  
To me, that am now lerned in this lore :  
Lord, welcome be thy lust and thy plesance,  
My lust I put all in thyn ordinance.

Kepeth this child, al be it foule or faire,  
And eke my wif, unto min home coming :  
Crist whan him list may senden me an heire,  
More agreable than this to my liking.  
This lettre he seled, prively weping,  
Which to the messenger was taken sone,  
And forth he goth, ther is no more to done.

O messenger, fulfilled of dronkenesse,  
Strong is thy breth, thy limmes faltren ay,  
And thou bewreiest alle secrenesse ;  
Thy mind is lorne, thou janglest as a jay ;  
Thy face is tourned in a new array ;  
Ther dronkenesse regneth in any route,  
Ther is no conseil hid withouten doute.

O Donegild, I ne have non English digne  
Unto thy malice, and thy tirannie :  
And therefore to the fende I thee resigne,  
Let him enditen of thy traitorie.  
Fy mannish, fy ; o nay by God I lie ;  
Fy fendliche spirit, for I dare wel telle,  
Though thou here walke, thy spirit is in helle.

This messenger cometh fro the king again,  
And at the kinges modres court he light,  
And she was of this messenger ful fayn,  
And plesed him in all that ever she might.

He dranke, and wel his girdel underpight;  
He slepeth, and he snoreth in his gise  
All night, until the sonne gan arise.

Eft were his lettres stolen everich on,  
And contrefeted lettres in this wise.  
The king commanded his constable anon  
Up peine of hanging and of high jewise,  
The he ne shulde soffren in no wise  
Custance within his regne for to abide  
Three daies, and a quarter of a tide;

But in the same ship as he hire fond,  
Hire and hire yonge sone, and all hire gere  
He shulde put, and croude hire fro the lond,  
And charge hire, that she never eft come there.  
O my Custance, wel may thy ghost have fere,  
And sleping in thy dreame ben in penance,  
Whan Donegild cast all this ordinance.

This messenger on morwe whan he awoke,  
Unto the castel halt the nexte way;  
And to the constable he the lettre toke;  
And whan that he this pitous lettre sey,  
Ful oft he sayd alas, and wala wa;  
Lord Crist, quod he, how may this world endure?  
So ful of sinne is many a creature.

O mighty God, if that it be thy will,  
Sin thou art rightful juge, how may it be  
That thou wolt soffren innocence to spill,  
And wicked folke regne in prosperitee?  
A good Custance, alas! so wo is me,  
That I mote be thy turmentour, or dey  
On shames deth, ther is non other wey.

Wepen both yong and old in al that place,  
Whan that the king this cursed lettre sent :  
And Custance with a dedly pale face  
The fourthe day toward the ship she went :  
But natheles she taketh in good entent  
The will of Crist, and kneling on the strand  
She sayde, Lord, ay welcome be thy sond.

He that me kepte fro the false blame,  
While I was in the lond amonges you,  
He can me kepe fro harme and eke fro shame  
In the salt see, although I se not how :  
As strong as ever he was, he is yet now,  
In him trust I, and in his mother dere,  
That is to me my sail and eke my stere.

Hire litel child lay weping in hire arm,  
And kneling pitously to him she said,  
Pees, litel sone, I wol do thee no harm :  
With that hire couverchief of hire hed she braid,  
And over his litel eyen she it laid,  
And in hire arme she lulleth it ful fast,  
And into the heven hire eyen up she cast.

Mother, quod she, and mayden bright Marie,  
Soth is, that thurgh womannes eggement  
Mankind was lorne, and damned ay to die,  
For which thy child was on a crois yrent :  
Thy blisful eyen saw all his turment,  
Than is ther no comparison betwene  
Thy wo, and any wo man may sustene.

Thou saw thy child yslain before thin eyen,  
And yet now liveth my litel child parfay :  
Now, lady bright, to whom all woful crien,  
Thou glory of womanhed, thou faire may,

Thou haven of refute, bright sterre of day,  
Rew on my child, that of thy gentillesse  
Rewest on every rewful in distresse.

O litel child, alas ! what is thy gilt,  
That never wroughtest sinne as yet parde ?  
Why wol thin harde father have thee spilt ?  
O mercy, dere constable, (quod she)  
As let my little child dwell here with thee :  
And if thou darst not saven him fro blame,  
So kisse him ones in his fadres name.

Therwith she loketh backward to the lond,  
And saide ; Farewel, housbond routheles !  
And up she rist, and walketh down the strond  
Toward the ship, hire foloweth all the prees :  
And ever she praieth hire child to hold his pees,  
And taketh hire leve, and with an holy entent  
She blesseth hire, and into the ship she went.

Vitailled was the ship, it is no drede,  
Habundantly for hire a ful long space :  
And other necessities that shuld nede  
She had ynow, heried be Goddes grace :  
For wind and wether, almighty God purchase,  
And bring hire home, I can no better say,  
But in the see she driveth forth hire way.

Alla the king cometh home sone after this  
Unto his castel, of the which I told,  
And asketh wher his wif and his child is ;  
The constable gan about his herte cold,  
And plainly all the matere he him told  
As ye han herd, I can tell it no better,  
And shewed the king his sele and his letter ;

And sayde ; Lord, as ye commanded me  
Up peine of deth, so have I don certain.  
This messenger turmented was, til he  
Moste beknowe, and tellen plat and plain,  
Fro night to night in what place he had lain :  
And thus by wit and subtil enquering  
Imagined was by whom this harm gan spring.

The hand was knowen that the lettre wrote,  
And all the venime of this cursed dede ;  
But in what wise, certainly I n'ot.  
The effect is this, that Alla out of drede  
His moder slew, that moun men plainly rede,  
For that she traitour was to hire ligeance :  
Thus endeth this old Donegild with meschance.

The sorwe that this Alla night and day  
Maketh for his wif and for his child also,  
Ther is no tonge that it tellen may.  
But now wol I agen to Custance go,  
That fleteth in the see in peine and wo  
Five yere and more, as liked Cristes sonde,  
Or that hire ship approached to the londe.

Under an hethen castel at the last,  
(Of which the name in my text I not find)  
Custance and eke hire child the see up cast.  
Almighty God, that saved all mankind,  
Have on Custance and on hire child som mind,  
That fallen is in hethen hond eftsonne  
In point to spill, as I shal tell you sone.

Doun fro the castel cometh ther many a wight  
To gauren on this ship, and on Custance :  
But shortly fro the castel on a night,  
The lordes steward (God yeve him meschance)

A thief, that had reneyed our creance,  
Came into the ship alone, and said, he wolde  
Hire lemman be, whether she wolde or n'olde.

Wo was this wretched woman tho begon,  
Hire child cried, and she cried pitously :  
But blisful Mary halpe hire right anon,  
For with hire strogling wel and mightily  
The thief fell over bord al sodenly,  
And in the see he drenched for vengeance,  
And thus hath Crist unwemmed kept Custance.

O foule lust of luxurie, lo thin ende,  
Nat only that thou faintest mannes mind,  
But veraily thou wolt his body shende.  
Th'ende of thy werk, or of thy lustes blind,  
Is complaining : how many may men find,  
That not for werk somtime, but for th'entent  
To don this sinne, ben other slain or shent.

How may this weke woman han the strength  
Hire to defend again this renegade ?  
O Goliath, unmesurable of length,  
How mighte David maken thee so mate ?  
So yonge, and of armure so desolate,  
How dorst he loke upon thy dredful face ?  
Wel may men seen it was but Goddes grace.

Who yaf Judith corage or hardinesse  
To sleen him Holofernes in his tent,  
And to deliver out of wretchednesse  
The peple of God ? I say for this entent,  
That right as God spirit of vigour sent  
To hem, and saved hem but of meschance,  
So sent he might and vigour to Custance.

Forth goth hire ship thurghout the narwe mouth  
Of Jubaltare and Septe, driving alway,  
Somtime West, and sometime North and South,  
And sometime Est, ful many a wery day :  
Til Cristes moder (blessed be she ay)  
Hath shapen thurgh hire endeles goodnesse  
To make an end of all hire hevinesse.

Now let us stint of Custance but a throw,  
And speke we of the Romane emperour,  
That out of Surrie hath by lettres knowe  
The slaughter of cristen folk, and dishonour  
Don to his doughter by a false traitour,  
I mene the cursed wicked Soudannesse,  
That at the fest let sleen both more and lesse.

For which this emperour hath sent anon  
His senatour, with real ordinance,  
And other lordes, God wote, many on,  
On Surriens to taken high vengeance :  
They brennen, sleen, and bring hem to meschance  
Ful many a day : but shortly this is th'ende,  
Homward to Rome they shapen hem to wende.

This senatour repaireth with victorie  
To Rome ward sayling ful really,  
And met the ship driving, as saith the storie,  
In which Custance sitteth ful pitously :  
Nothing ne knew he what she was, ne why  
She was in swiche array, ne she wil sey  
Of hire estat, though that she shulde dey.

He bringeth hire to Rome, and to his wif  
He yaf hire, and hire yonge sone also :  
And with the senatour she lad hire lif.  
Thus can our lady bringen out of wo

Woful Custance, and many another mo :  
And longe time dwelled she in that place,  
In holy werkes ever, as was hire grace.

The senatoures wif her aunte was,  
But for all that she knew hire never the more :  
I wol no longer tarien in this cas,  
But to king Alla, which I spake of yore,  
That for his wif wepeth and siketh sore,  
I wol returne, and let I wol Custance  
Under the senatoures governance.

King Alla, which that had his moder slain,  
Upon a day fell in swiche repentance,  
That if I shortly tellen shal and plain,  
To Rome he cometh to receive his penance,  
And putte him in the popes ordinance  
In high and low, and Jesu Crist besought,  
Foryeve his wicked werkes that he had wrought.

The same anon thurghout the toun is born,  
How Alla king shal come on pilgrimage,  
By herbergeours that wenten him besorn,  
For which the senatour, as was usage,  
Rode him againe, and many of his linage,  
As wel to shewen his high magnificence,  
As to don any king a reverence.

Gret chere doth this noble senatour  
To king Alla, and he to him also ;  
Everich of hem doth other gret honour ;  
And so befell, that in a day or two  
This senatour is to king Alla go  
To fest, and shortly, if I shal not lie,  
Custances sone went in his compaignie.



Som men wold sain at requeste of Custance  
This senatour hath lad this child to feste :  
I may not tellen every circumstance,  
Be as he may, ther was he at the leste :  
But soth is this, that at his mothers heste  
Beform Alla, during the metes space,  
The child stood, loking in the kinges face.

This Alla king hath of this child gret wonder,  
And to the senatour he said anon,  
Whos is that faire child that stondeth yonder ?  
I no't, quod he, by God and by Seint John ;  
A moder he hath, but fader hath he non,  
That I of wote : but shortly in a stound  
He told Alla how that this child was found.

But God wot, quod this senatour also,  
So vertuous a liver in all my lif  
Ne saw I never, as she, ne herd of mo  
Of worldly woman, maiden, widewe or wif :  
I dare wel sayn hire hadde lever a knif  
Thurghout hire brest, than ben a woman wikke,  
Ther is no man coude bring hire to that prikke.

Now was this child as like unto Custance  
As possible is a creature to be :  
This Alla hath the face in remembrance  
Of dame Custance, and theron mused he,  
If that the childes moder were aught she  
That is his wif, and prively he sighte,  
And sped him fro the table that he mighte.

Parfay, thought he, fantome is in min hed.  
I ought to deme of skilful jugement,  
That in the salte see my wif is ded.  
And afterward he made his argument ;

What wot I, if that Crist have hider sent  
My wif by see, as wel as he hire lent  
To my contree, fro thennes that she went?

And after noon home with the senatour  
Goth Alla, for to see this wonder chance.  
This senatour doth Alla gret honour,  
And hastily he sent after Custance :  
But trusteth wel, hire luste not to dance.  
Whan that she wiste wherfore was that sonde,  
Unnethe upon hire feet she mighte stonde.

Whan Alla saw his wif, faire he hire grette,  
And wept, that it was routhe for to see,  
For at the firste look he on hire sette  
He knew wel veraily that it was she :  
And she for sorwe, as domb stant as a tree :  
So was hire herte shette in hire distresse,  
Whan she remembered his unkindenesse.

Twies she swouneth in his owen sight,  
He wepeth and him excuseth pitously :  
Now God, quod he, and all his halwes bright  
So wisly on my soule as have mercy,  
That of youre harme as gilteles am I,  
As is Maurice my sone, so like your face,  
Elles the fend me fetche out of this place.

Long was the sobbing and the bitter peine,  
Or that hir woful hertes mighten cese,  
Great was the pitoe for to here hem pleine,  
Thurgh whiche pleintes gan hir wo encrease.

I pray you all my labour to relese,  
I may not tell hir wo until to-morwe,  
I am so wery for to speke of sorwe.

But finally, whan that the soth is wist,  
That Alla gilteles was of hire wo,  
I trow an hundred times han they kist,  
And swiche a blisse is ther betwix hem two,  
That save the joye that lasteth evermo,  
Ther is non like, that any creature  
Hath seen or shal, while that the world may dure.

Tho praied she hire husbond mekely  
In releef of hire longe pitous pine,  
That he wold pray hire fader specially,  
That of his magestee he wold encline  
To vouchesauf som day with him to dine :  
She praied him eke, he shulde by no way  
Unto hire fader no word of hire say.

Som men wold sayn, how that the child Maurice  
Doth this message until this emperour :  
But as I gesse, Alla was not so nice,  
To him that is so souveraine of honour,  
As he that is of cristen folk the flour,  
Send any child, but it is bet to deme  
He went himself, and so it may wel seme.

This emperour hath granted gentilly  
To come to dinner, as he him besoughte :  
And wel rede I, he loked besily  
Upon this child, and on his doughter thought.

Alla goth to his inne, and as him ought  
Arraied for this feste in every wise,  
As ferforth as his conning may suffice.

Ther morwe came, and Alla gan him dresse,  
And eke his wif, this emperour to mete :  
And forth they ride in joye and in gladnesse,  
And whan she saw hire fader in the strete,  
She light adoun and falleth him to sete.  
Fader, quod she, your yonge child Custance  
Is now ful clene out of your remembrance.

I am your doughter, your Custance, quod she,  
That whilom ye han sent into Surrie ;  
It am I, fader, that in the salte see  
Was put alone, and dampned for to die.  
Now, goode fader, I you mercy crie,  
Send me no more into non hethenesse,  
But thanketh my lord here of his kindenesse.

Who can the pitous joye tellen all  
Betwix hem thre, sin they ben thus ymette?  
But of my tale make an ende I shal,  
The day goth fast, I wol no longer lette.  
Thise glade folk to dinner ben ysette,  
In joy and blisse at mete I let hem dwell,  
A thousand fold wel more than I can tell.

This child Maurice was sithen emperour  
Made by the pope, and lived cristenly,  
To Cristes chirche did he gret honour :  
But I let all his storie passen by,

Of Custance is my tale specially,  
In the olde Romane gestes men may find  
Maurices lif, I bere it not in mind.

This king Alla, whan he his time sey,  
With his Custance, his holy wif so swete,  
To England ben they come the right ewey,  
Ther as they live in joye and in quite.  
But litel while it lasteth I you hete,  
Joye of this world for time wol not abide,  
Fro day to night it changeth as the tide.

Who lived ever in swiche delite o day,  
That him ne meved other conscience,  
Or ire, or talent, or som kin affray,  
Envie, or pride, or passion, or offence?  
I ne say but for this end this sentence,  
That litel while in joye or in plesance  
Lasteth the blisse of Alla with Custance.

For deth, that taketh of hie and low his rente,  
Whan passed was a yere, even as I gesse,  
Out of this world this king Alla he hente,  
For whom Custance hath ful gret hevinesse.  
Now let us praïen God his soule blesse :  
And dame Custance, finally to say,  
Toward the toun of Rome goth hire way.

To Rome is come this holy creature,  
And findeth ther hire frendes hole and sound :  
Now is she scaped all hire aventure :  
And whan that she hire fader hath yfound,  
Doun on hire knees falleth she to ground,  
Weping for tendernesse in herte blithe  
She herieth God an hundred thousand sithe.

In vertue and in holy almesse dede  
They liven alle, and never asonder wende ;  
Till deth departeth hem, this lif they lede :  
And fareth now wel, my tale is at an ende.  
Now Jesu Crist, that of his might may sende  
Joye after wo, governe us in his grace,  
And kepe us alle that ben in this place.

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THE WIF OF BATHES TALE.

BUT for ye speken of swiche gentillesse,  
As is descended out of old richesse,  
That therfore shullen ye be gentilmen ;  
Swiche arrogance n'is not worth an hen.  
Loke who that is most vertuous alway,  
Prive and apert, and most entendeth ay  
To do the gentil dedes that he can,  
And take him for the grettest gentilman.  
Crist wol we claime of him our gentillesse,  
Not of our elders for hir old richesse.  
For though they yeve us all hir heritage,  
For which we claime to ben of high parage,  
Yet may they not bequethen, for no thing,  
To non of us, hir vertuous living,  
That made hem gentilmen called to be,  
And bade us solwen hem in swiche degree.  
Wel can the wise poet of Florence,  
That highte Dant, speken of this sentence :  
Lo, in swiche maner rime is Dantes tale.  
Ful selde up riseth by his branches smale  
Prowesse of man, for God of his goodnesse  
Wol that we claime of him our gentillesse :

For of our elders may we nothing claime  
But temporel thing, that man may hurt and maime.

Eke every wight wot this as wel as I,  
If gentillesse were planted naturelly  
Unto a certain linage doun the line,  
Prive and apert, than wold they never fine  
To don of gentillesse the faire office,  
They mighten do no vilanie or vice.

Take fire and bere it into the derkest hous  
Betwix this and the mount of Caucasus,  
And let men shette the dores, and go thenne,  
Yet wol the fire as faire lie and brenne  
As twenty thousand men might it behold ;  
His office naturel ay wol it hold,  
Up peril of my lif, til that I die.

Here may ye see well, how that genterie  
Is not annexed to possession,  
Sith folk ne don hir operation  
Alway, as doth the fire, lo, in his kind.  
For God it wot, men moun ful often find  
A lordes sone do shame and vilanie.  
And he that wol han pris of his genterie,  
For he was boren of a gentil hous,  
And had his elders noble and vertuous,  
And n'ill himselven do no gentil dedes,  
Ne folwe his gentil auncestrie, that ded is,  
He n'is not gentil, be he duk or erl ;  
For vilains sinful dedes make a cherl.  
For gentillesse n'is but the renomee  
Of thin auncestres, for hir high bountee,  
Which is a strange thing to thy persone :  
Thy gentillesse cometh fro God alone.  
Than cometh our veray gentillesse of grace,  
It was no thing bequeathed us with our place.

Thinketh how noble, as saith Valerius.  
Was thilke Tullius Hostilius,

That out of poverte rose to high noblesse.  
Redeth Senek, and redeth eke Boece,  
Ther shull ye seen expresse, that it no dred is,  
That he is gentil that doth gentil dedis.  
And therefore, leve husbond, I thus conclude ;  
Al be it that min auncestres weren rude,  
Yet may the highe God, and so hope I,  
Granten me grace to liven vertuously :  
Than am I gentil, whan that I beginne  
To liven vertuously, and weiven sinne.

And ther as ye of poverte me repreve,  
The highe God, on whom that we beleve,  
In wilful poverte chese to lede his lif :  
And certes, every man, maiden, or wif  
May understand, that Jesus heven king  
Ne wold not chese a vicious living.

Glad poverte is an honest thing certain.  
This wol Senek and other clerkes sain.  
Who so that halt him paid of his poverte,  
I hold him rich, al had he not a sherte.  
He that coveiteth is a poure wight,  
For he wold han that is not in his might.  
But he that nought hath, ne coveiteth to have,  
Is riche, although ye hold him but a knave.  
Veray poverte is sinne proprely.

Juvenal saith of poverte merily :  
The poure man whan he goth by the way,  
Beforn the theves he may sing and play.  
Poverte is hateful good ; and, as I gesse,  
A ful gret bringer out of besinesse ;  
A gret amender eke of sapience  
To him, that taketh it in patience.  
Poverte is this, although it seme elenge,  
Possession that no wight wol challenge.  
Poverte ful often, whan a man is low,  
Maketh his God and eke himself to know :



Poverté a spectakel is, as thinketh me,  
Thurgh which he may his veray frendes see.  
And therfore, sire, sin that I you not greve,  
Of my poverté no more me repreve.

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## THE DOCTOURES TALE.

THER was, as telleth Titus Livius,  
A knight, that cleped was Virginius,  
Fulfilled of honour and worthinesse,  
And strong of frendes, and of gret richesse.  
This knight a daughter hadde by his wif.  
No children had he mo in all his lif.  
Faire was this maid in excellent beautee  
Aboven every wight that man may see :  
For nature hath with souveraine diligence  
Yformed hire in so gret excellence,  
As though she wolde sayn, lo, I nature,  
Thus can I forme and peint a creature,  
Whan that me list ; who can me contrefete ?  
Pigmalion ? not, though he ay forge and beté,  
Or grave, or peinte : for I dare wel sain,  
Apelles, Xeuxis, shulden werche in vain,  
Other to grave, or peinte, or forge, or beté,  
If they presumed me to contrefete.  
For he that is the former principal,  
Hath maked me his vicaire general  
To forme and peinten erthly creatures  
Right as me list, and eche thing in my cure is  
Under the mone, that may wane and waxe.  
And for my werk right nothing wol I axe ;  
My lord and I ben ful of on accord.  
I made hire to the worship of my lord ;

So do I all min other creatures,  
What colour that they han, or what figures.  
Thus semeth me that nature wolde say.

This maid of age twelf yere was and tway,  
In which that nature hadde swiche delit.  
For right as she can paint a lily whit  
And red a rose, right with swiche peinture  
She painted hath this noble creature  
Er she was borne, upon hire limmes free,  
Wheras by right swiche colours shulden be :  
And Phebus died hath hire tresses grete,  
Like to the stremes of his burned hete.  
And if that excellent were hire beautee,  
A thousand fold more vertuous was she.  
In hire ne lacked no condition,  
That is to preise, as by discrecion.  
As wel in gost as body, chast was she :  
For which she floured in virginitee,  
With all humilitee and abstinence,  
With all attemperance and patience,  
With mesure eke, of bering and array.  
Discrete she was in answering alway,  
Though she were wise as Pallas, dare I sain,  
Hire facounde eke ful womanly and plain,  
No contrefeted termes hadde she  
To semen wise ; but after hire degrec  
She spake, and all hire wordes more and lesse  
Souning in vertue and in gentillesse.  
Shamelast she was in maidens shamefastnesse,  
Constant in herte, and ever in besinesse  
To drive hire out of idel slogardie :  
Bacchus had of hire mouth right no maistrie.  
For wine and youthe don Venus encrese,  
As men in fire wol casten oile and grese.  
And of hire owen vertue unconstrained,  
She hath hireself ful often sike yfeined,

For that she wolde fleen the compaignie,  
Wher likely was to treten of folie,  
As is at festes, at revels, and at dances,  
That ben occasions of daliances.  
Swiche thinges maken children for to be  
To sone ripe and bold, as men may see,  
Which is ful perilous, and hath ben yore,  
For al to sone may she lernen lore  
Of boldnesse, whan she woxen is a wif.

And ye maistresses in your olde lif,  
That lordes doughters han in governance,  
Ne taketh of my wordes displesance :  
Thinketh that ye ben set in governinges  
Of lordes doughters, only for two thinges  
Other for ye han kept your honestee,  
Or elles for ye han fallen in freelte,  
And knowen wel ynough the olde dance,  
And han forsaken fully swiche meschance  
For evermo : therfore for Cristes sake  
To teche hem vertue loke that ye ne slake.

A thief of venison, that hath forlaft  
His likerousnesse, and all his olde craft,  
Can kepe a forest best of any man :  
Now kepeth him wel, for if ye wol ye can.  
Loke wel, that ye unto no vice assent,  
Lest ye be damned for your wikke entent,  
For who so doth, a traytour is certain :  
And taketh kepe of that I shal you sain ;  
Of alle treson souveraine pestilence  
Is, whan a wight betrayeth innocence.

Ye fathers, and ye mothers eke also,  
Though ye han children, be it on or mo,  
Your is the charge of all hir surveance,  
While that they ben under your governance.  
Beth ware, that by ensample of your living,  
Or by your negligence in chastising,

That they ne perish : for I dare wel saye,  
If that they don, ye shul it dere abeye.  
Under a shepherd soft and negligent,  
The wolf hath many a shepe and lamb to-rent.

Sufficeth this ensample now as here,  
For I mote turne agen to my matere.

This maid, of which I tell my tale expresse,  
She kept hireself, hire neded no maistresse ;  
For in hire living maidens mighten rede,  
As in a book, every good word and dede,  
That longeth to a maiden vertuous :  
She was so prudent and so bounteous.  
For which the fame out sprong on every side  
Both of hire beautee and hire bountee wide :  
That thurgh the lond they preised hire ech one,  
That loved vertue, sauf envie alone,  
That sory is of other mannes wele,  
And glad is of his sorwe and his unhele.  
The doctour maketh this descriptioun.

This maiden on a day went in the toun  
Toward a temple, with hire mother dere,  
As is of yonge maidens the manere.

Now was ther than a justice in that toun,  
That governour was of that region :  
And so befell, this juge his eyen cast  
Upon this maid, avising hire ful fast,  
As she came forth by ther this juge stood :  
Anon his herte changed and his mood,  
So was he caught with beautee of this maid,  
And to himself ful prively he said,  
This maiden shal be min for any man.

Anon the fend into his herte ran,  
And taught him sodenly, that he by sleight  
This maiden to his purpos winnen might.  
For certes, by no force, ne by no mede,  
Him thought he was not able for to spede ;

For she was strong of frendes, and eke she  
Confermed was in swiche souveraine bountee,  
That wel he wist he might hire never winne,  
As for to make hire with hire body sinne.  
For which with gret deliberatioun  
He sent after a cherl was in the toun,  
The which he knew for sotil and for bold.  
This juge unto this cherl his tale hath told  
In secree wise, and made him to ensure,  
He shulde tell it to no creature,  
And if he did, he shulde lese his hede.  
And whan assented was this cursed rede,  
Glad was the juge, and maked him gret chere,  
And yaf him yestes precious and dere.

Whan shapen was all hir conspiracie  
Fro point to point, how that his lecherie  
Parformed shulde be ful sotilly,  
As ye shul here it after openly,  
Home goth this cherl, that highte Claudius.  
This false juge, that highte Appius,  
(So was his name, for it is no fable,  
But knowen for an historial thing notable :  
The sentence of it soth is out of doute)  
This false juge goth now fast aboute  
To hasten his delit all that he may.  
And so befell, sone after on a day  
This false juge, as telleth us the storie,  
As he was wont, sat in his consistorie,  
And yaf his domes upon sondry cas :  
This false cherl came forth a ful gret pas,  
And saide ; lord, if that it be your will,  
As doth me right upon this pitous bill,  
In which I plaine upon Virginius.  
And if that he wol sayn it is not thus,  
I wol it preve, and finden good witnesse,  
That soth is that my bille wol expresse.

The juge answerd, of this in his absence  
I may not yeve diffinitif sentence.  
Let don him call, and I wol gladly here ;  
Thou shalt have right, and no wrong as now here.

Virginus came to wete the juges will,  
And right anon was red this cursed bill ;  
The sentence of it was as ye shul here.

To you, my lord sire Appius so dere,  
Sheweth your poure servant Claudius,  
How that a knight called Virginus,  
Agein the lawe, agein all equitee,  
Holdeth, expresse agein the will of me,  
My servant, which that is my thral by right,  
Which from min hous was stolen on a night  
While that she was ful yong, I wol it preve  
By witnesse, lord, so that it you not greve ;  
She n'is his doughter nought, what so he say  
Wherefore to you, my lord the juge, I pray :  
Yelde me my thral, if that it be your will.  
Lo, this was all the sentence of his bill.

Virginus gan upon the cherl behold ;  
But hastily, er he his tale told,  
And wold han preved it, as shuld a knight,  
And eke by witnessing of many a wight,  
That all was false, that said his adversary,  
This cursed juge wolde nothing tary,  
Ne here a word more of Virginus,  
But yave his jugement, and saide thus.

I deme anon this cherl his servant have.  
Thou shalt no lenger in thin hous hire save.  
Go bring hire forth, and put hire in our ward.  
The cherl shal have his thral ; thus I award.

And whan this worthy knight Virginus,  
Thurgh sentence of this justice Appius,  
Muste by force his dere doughter yeven  
Unto the juge, in lecherie to liven,

He goth him home, and set him in his hall,  
And let anon his dere doughter call :  
And with a face ded as ashen cold,  
Upon hire humble face he gan behold,  
With fadres pitee stiking thurgh his herte,  
Al wold he from his purpos not converte.

Doughter, quod he, Virginia by thy name,  
Ther ben two waies, other deth or shame,  
That thou must suffre, alas that I was bore !  
For never thou deservedest wherfore  
To dien with a swerd or with a knif.  
O dere doughter, ender of my lif,  
Which I have fostred up with swiche plesance,  
That thou were never out of my remembrance ;  
O doughter, which that art my laste wo,  
And in my lif my laste joye also,  
O gemme of chastitee, in patience  
Take thou thy deth, for this is my sentence ;  
For love and not for hate thou must be ded,  
My pitous hond must smiten of thin hed.  
Alas that ever Appius thee say !  
Thus hath he falsely juged thee to-day.  
And told hire all the cas, as ye before  
Han herd, it nedeth not to tell it more.

O mercy. dere father, quod this maid.  
And with that word she both hire armes laid  
About his necke, as she was wont to do,  
(The teres brast out of hire eyen two,)  
And said, O goode father, shal I die ?  
Is ther no grace ? is ther no remedie ?

No certes, dere doughter min, quod he.  
Than yeve me leiser, father min, quod she,  
My deth for to complaine a litel space :  
For parde Jepte yave his daughter grace  
For to complaine, or he hire slow, alas !  
And God it wot, nothing was hire trespas,

But for she ran hire father first to see,  
To welcome him with gret solempnitee.  
And with that word she fell aswouned anon,  
And after, whan hire swooning was agon,  
She riseth up, and to hire father said :  
Blessed be God, that I shall die a maid.  
Yeve me my deth, or that I have a shame.  
Doth with your child your wille a goddes name.  
And with that word she praied him ful oft,  
That with his swerd he wolde smite hire soft ;  
And with that word, aswouned again she fell.  
Hire father, with ful sorweful herte and will,  
Hire hed of smote, and by the top it hent,  
And to the juge he gan it to present,  
As he sat yet in dome in consistorie.

And whan the juge it saw, as saith the storie,  
He bad to take him, and anhang him fast.  
But right anon a thousand peple in thrast  
To save the knight, for routh and for pitee,  
For knownen was the false iniquitee.

The peple anon had suspect in this thing  
By maner of the cherles chalenging,  
That it was by the assent of Appius ;  
They wisten wel that he was lecherous.  
For which unto this Appius they gon,  
And caste him in a prison right anon,  
Wheras he slow himself : and Claudius,  
That servant was unto this Appius,  
Was demed for to hange upon a tree ;  
But that Virginius of his pitee  
So prayed for him, that he was exiled,  
And elles certes had he ben begiled :  
The remenant were anhangd, more and lesse,  
That were consentant of this cursednesse.

Here men may see how sin hath his merite :  
Beth ware, for no man wot whom God wol smite



In no degree, ne in which maner wise  
 The worme of conscience may agrise  
 Of wicked lif, though it so privee be,  
 That no man wote therof, sauf God and he :  
 For be he lewed man or elles lered,  
 He n'ot how sone that he shal ben afered.  
 Therfore I rede you this conseil take,  
 Forsaketh sinne, or sinne you forsake.

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## THE NONNES PREESTES TALE.

## THE NONNES PREESTES PROLOGUE.

Ho ! quod the knight, good sire, no more of this :  
 That ye han said, it right ynough ywis,  
 And mochel more ; for litel hevinesse  
 Is right ynough to mochel folk, I gesse.  
 I say for me, it is a gret disese,  
 Wher as men have ben in gret welth and ese,  
 To heren of hir soden fall, alas !  
 And the contrary is joye and gret solas,  
 As whan a man hath ben in poure estat,  
 And climbeth up, and wexeth fortunat,  
 And ther abideth in prosperitee :  
 Swiche thing is gladsom, as it thinketh me,  
 And of swiche thing were goodly for to telle.  
 Ye, quod our hoste, by Seint Poules belle,  
 Ye say right soth ; this monk hath clapped loude :  
 He spake, how fortune covered with a cloude  
 I wote not what, and als of a tragedie  
 Right now ye herd : and parde no remedie  
 It is for to bewailen, ne complaine  
 That that is don, and als it is a paine,  
 As ye han said, to here of hevinesse.

Sire monk, no more of this, so God you blesse ;  
 Your tale anoyeth all this compaignie ;  
 Swiche talking is not worth a boterflie,  
 For therin is ther no disport ne game :  
 Therfore, sire monk, dan Piers by your name,  
 I pray you hertely, tell us somewhat elles,  
 For sikerly, n'ere clinking of your belles,  
 That on your bridel hange on every side,  
 By heven king, that for us alle dide,  
 I shuld er this have fallen down for slepe,  
 Although the slough had ben never so depe :  
 Than hadde your tale all ben tolde in vain.  
 For certainly, as that thise clerkes sain,  
 Wher as a man may have non audience,  
 Nought helpeth it to tellen his sentence.  
 And wel I wote the substance is in me,  
 If any thing shal wel reported be  
 Sire, say somewhat of hunting, I you pray.

Nay, quod this Monk, I have no lust to play :  
 Now let another telle as I have told.

Than spake our hoste with rude speche and bold,  
 And sayd unto the Nonnes Preest anon,  
 Come nere, thou preest, come hither, thou Sire John,  
 Telle us swiche thing, as may our hertes glade.  
 Be blithe, although thou ride upon a jade.  
 What though thyn horse be bothe foule and lene,  
 If he wol serve thee, recke thee not a bene :  
 Loke that thyn herte be mery evermo.

Yes, hoste, quod he, so mote I ride or go,  
 But I be mery, ywis I wol be blamed.  
 And right anon his tale he hath attamed ;  
 And thus he said unto us everich on,  
 This swete preest, this goodly man Sire John.

## THE NONNES PREESTES TALE.

A **POURE** widewe somdel stoupen in age,  
Was whilom dwelling in a narwe cotage,  
Beside a grove, standing in a dale.  
This widewe, which I tell you of my tale,  
Sin thilke day that she was last a wif,  
In patience led a ful simple lif.  
For litel was hire catel and hire rente :  
By husbondry of swiche as God hire sente,  
She found hireself, and eke hire doughtren two.  
Three large sowes had she, and no mo ;  
Three kine and eke a sheep that highte Malle.  
Ful sooty was hire boure, and eke hire halle,  
In which she ete many a slender mele.  
Of poinant sauce ne knew she never a dele.  
No deintee morsel passed thurgh hire throte ;  
Hire diete was accordant to hire cote.  
Repletion ne made hire never sike ;  
Attempre diete was all her physike,  
And exercise, and hertes suffisance.  
The goute let hire nothing for to dance,  
No apoplexie shente not hire hed.  
No win ne dranke she, neyther white ne red :  
Hire bord was served most with white and black,  
Milk and broun bred, in which she fond no lack,  
Seinde bacon, and sometime an ey or twey ;  
For she was as it were a maner dey.  
A yerd she had, enclosed all about  
With stickes, and a drie diche without,  
In which she had a cok highte Chaunteclere,  
In all the land of crowing n'as his pere.  
His vois was merier than the mery orgon,  
On masse daies that in the chirches gon.  
Wel sikerer was his crowing in his loge,

Than is a klok, or any abbey orloge.  
By nature he knew eche ascentioun  
Of the equinoctial in thilke toun ;  
For whan degrees fiftene were ascended,  
Then crew he, that it might not ben amended.

His combe was redder than the fin corall,  
Enbattelled, as it were a castel wall.  
His bill was black, and as the jet it shone ;  
Like asure were his legges and his tone ;  
His nailes whiter than the lily flour,  
And like the burned gold was his colour.

This gentil cok had in his governance  
Seven hennes, for to don all his plesance,  
Which were his susters and his paramoures,  
And wonder like to him, as of coloures.  
Of which the fairest hewed in the throte,  
Was cleped faire damoselle Pertelote.  
Curteis she was, discrete, and debonaire,  
And compenable, and bare hireself so faire,  
Sithen the day that she was sevennight old,  
That trowelich she hath the herte in hold  
Of Chaunteclere, loken in every lith :  
He loved hire so, that wel was him therwith.  
But swiche a joye it was to here hem sing,  
Whan that the brighte sonne gan to spring,  
In swete accord : my lefe is fare in lond.

For thilke time, as I have understond,  
Bestes and briddes couden speke and sing.

And so befell, that in a dawening,  
As Chaunteclere among his wives alle  
Sate on his perche, that was in the halle,  
And next him sate his faire Pertelote,  
This Chaunteclere gan gronen in his throte,  
As man that in his dreame is dretched sore.  
And whan that Pertelote thus herd him rore,  
She was agast, and saide, herte dere,

What aileth you to grone in this manere?  
Ye ben a veray sleper, fy for shame.

And he answered and sayde thus; madame,  
I pray you, that ye take it not agrefe:  
By God me mette I was in swiche mischefe  
Right now, that yet min herte is sore afright.  
Now God (quod he) my sweven recche aright,  
And kepe my body out of foule prisoun.

Me mette, how that I romed up and doun  
Within our yerde, wher as I saw a beste,  
Was like an hound, and wold han made areste  
Upon my body, and han had me ded.  
His colour was betwix yelwe and red;  
And tipped was his tail, and both his eres  
With black, unlike the remenant of his heres.  
His snout was smal, with glowing eyen twey:  
Yet for his loke almost for fere I dey:  
This caused me my groning douteles.

Avoy! quod she, fy on you herteles.  
Alas! quod she, for by that God above  
Now han ye lost myn herte and all my love;  
I cannnt love a coward by my faith.  
For certes, what so any woman saith,  
We all desiren, if it mighte be,  
To have an husband, hardy, wise and free,  
And secree, and non niggard ne no fool,  
Ne him that is agast of every tool,  
Ne non avantour by that God above.  
How dorsten ye for shame say to your love,  
That any thing might maken you aferde?  
Han ye no mannes herte, and han a berde?  
Alas! and con ye ben agast of swevenis?  
Nothing but vanitee, got wote, in sweven is.

Swevenes engendren of repletions,  
And oft of fume, and of complexions,  
Whan humours ben to habundant in a wight.

Certes this dreme, which ye han met to-night ;  
Cometh of the grete superfluitee  
Of youre rede *colera* parde,  
Which causeth folk to dreden in hir dremes  
Of arwes, and of fire with rede lemes,  
Of rede bestes, that they wol hem bite,  
On conteke, and of waspes gret and lite ;  
Right as the humour of melancolie  
Causeth ful many a man in slepe to crie,  
For fere of bolles, and of beres blake,  
Of elles that blake devils wol hem take.

Of other humours coud I telle also,  
That werken many a man in slepe moch wo :  
But I wol passe, as lightly as I can.

Lo Caton, which that was so wise a man,  
Said he not thus ? Ne do no force of dremes.

Now, Sire, quod she, whan we flee fro the bemes,  
For Goddes love, as take som laxatif :  
Up peril of my soule, and of my lif,  
I conseil you the best, I wol not lie,  
That both of coler, and of melancolie  
Ye purge you ; and for ye shul not tarie,  
Though in this toun be non apotecarie,  
I shal myself two herbes techen you,  
That shal be for your hele, and for your prow ;  
And in our yerde, the herbes shall I finde,  
The which han of hir propretee by kinde  
To purgen you benethe, and eke above  
Sire, forgete not this for Goddes love ;  
Ye ben ful colerike of complexion ;  
Ware that the sonne in his ascencion  
Ne finde you not replete of humours hote ;  
And if it do, I dare wel lay a grote.  
That ye shul han a fever tertiane,  
Or elles an ague, that may be your bane.  
A day or two ye shul han digestives

Of wormes, or ye take your laxatives,  
Of laureole, centaurie, and fumetere,  
Of elles of ellebor, that groweth there,  
Of catapuce, or of gaitre-beries,  
Or herbe ive growing in our yerd, that mery is :  
Picke hem right as they grow, and ete hem in.  
Beth mery, husbond, for your fader kin ;  
Dredeth no dreme ; I can say you no more,

Madame, quod he, *grand mercy* of your lore.  
But natheles, as touching dan Caton,  
That hath of wisdom swiche a gret renoun,  
Though that he bade no dremes for to drede,  
By God, men moun in olde bookes rede,  
Of many a man, more of auctoritee  
Than ever Caton was, so mote I the,  
That all the revers sayn of his sentence,  
And han wel founden by experience,  
That dremes ben significacions  
As wel of joye, as tribulations,  
That folk enduren in this lif present.  
Ther nedeth make of this non argument ;  
The veray preve sheweth it indede. . . .

But thilke tale is al to long to telle,  
And eke it is nigh day, I may not dwelle.  
Shortly I say, as for conclusion,  
That I shal han of this avision  
Adversitee : and I say forthermore,  
That I ne tell of laxatives no store,  
For they ben venimous, I wot it well :  
I hem deffie, I love hem never a del.

But let us speke of mirthe, and stinte all this ;  
Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,  
Of o thing God hath sent me large grace :  
For whan I see the beautee of your face,  
Ye ben so scarlet red about your eyen,  
It maketh all my drede for to dien,

For, al so siker as *In principio*,  
*Mulier est hominis confusio.*

(Madame, the sentence of this Latine is,  
Woman is mannes joye and mannes blis.)  
For whan I fele a-night your softe side,  
I am so ful of joye and of solas,  
That I deffie bothe sweven and dreme.

And with that word he flew down fro the beme,  
For it was day, and eke his hennes alle;  
And with a chuk he gan hem for to calle,  
For he had found a corn, lay in the yerd.  
Real he was, he was no more aferd;  
He fethered Pertelote twenty time,  
And trade hire eke as oft, er it was prime.  
He loketh as it were a grim leoun;  
And on his toos he rometh up and down,  
Him deigned not to set his feet to ground:  
He chukketh, whan he hath a corn yfound,  
And to him rennen than his wives alle.

Thus real, as a prince is in his halle,  
Leve I this Chaunteclere in his pasture;  
And after wol I tell his aventure.

Whan that the month in which the world began,  
That hitghte March, whan God first maketh man,  
Was complete, and ypassed were also,  
Sithen March ended, thriti dayes and two,  
Befell that Chaunteclere in all his pride,  
His seven wives walking him beside,  
Cast up his eyen to the brighte sonne,  
That in the signe of Taurus hadde yronne  
Twenty degrees and on, and somewhat more:  
He knew by kind, and by non other lore,  
That it was prime, and crew with blisful steven.  
The sonne, he said, is clomben up on heven  
Twenty degrees and on, and more ywis.  
Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,



Herkeneth thise blisful briddes how they sing,  
And see the freshe floures how they spring ;  
Ful is min herte of revel, and solas.

But sodenly him fell a sorweful cas ;  
For ever the latter ende of joye is wo :  
God wote that worldly joye is sone ago :  
And if a rethor coude faire endite,  
He in a chronicle might it saufly write,  
As for a souveraine notabilitee.

Now every wise man let him herken me :  
This story is al so trewe, I undertake,  
As is the book of Launcelot du lake,  
That women holde in ful gret reverence.  
Now wol I turne agen to my sentence.

A col fox, ful of sleigh iniquitee,  
That in the grove had wonned yeres three,  
By high imagination forecast,  
The same night thurghout the hegges brast  
Into the yerd, ther Chaunteclere the faire  
Was wont, and eke his wives, to repaire :  
And in a bedde of wortes stille he lay,  
Till it was passed undern of the day,  
Waiting his time on Chaunteclere to falle :  
As gladly don thise homicides alle,  
That in await ligen to mordre men.

O false morderour, rucking in thy den !  
O newe Scariot, newe Genelon !  
O false dissimulour, o Greek Sinon,  
That broughtest Troye al utterly to sorwe !  
O Chaunteclere, accursed be the morwe,  
That thou into thy yerd flew fro the bemes :  
Thou were ful wel ywarned by thy dremes,  
That thilke day was perilous to thee.  
But what that God forewote most nedes be,  
After the opinion of certain clerkes.  
Witnesse on him, that any parfit clerk is,

That in scole is gret altercation  
In this matere, and gret disputison,  
And hath ben of an hundred thousand men.  
But I ne cannot boult it to the bren,  
As can the holy doctour Augustin,  
Or Boece, or the bishop Bradwardin,  
Whether that Goddes worthy foreweting  
Streineth me nedely for to don a thing,  
(Nedely clepe I simple necessitee)  
Or elles if free chois be granted me  
To do that same thing, or do it nought,  
Though God forewot it, or that it was wrought ;  
Or if his weting streineth never a del,  
But by necessitee condicionel.  
I woll not han to don of swiche matere ;  
My tale is of a cok, as ye may here,  
That took his conseil of his wif with sorwe  
To walken in the yerd upon the morwe,  
That he had met the dreme, as I you told.  
Womennes conseils ben ful often cold ;  
Womannes conseil brought us first to wo,  
And made Adam fro paradis to go,  
Ther as he was ful mery, and wel at ese.  
But for I n'ot, to whom I might displese,  
If I conseil of women wolde blame,  
Passe over, for I said it in my game.  
Rede auctours, wher they trete of swiche matere,  
And what they sayn of women ye mown here..  
Thise ben the Cokkes wordes, and not mine ;  
I can non harme of no woman devine.

Faire in the sond, to bath hire merily,  
Lith Pertelote, and all hire susters by,  
Agein the sonne, and Chaunteclere so free  
Sang merier than the Mermaid in the see,  
For Phisiologus sayth sikerly,  
How that they singen wel and merily.

And so befell that as he cast his eye  
Among the wortes on a boterflie,  
He was ware of this fox that lay ful low.  
Nothing ne list him thanne for to crow,  
But cried anon cok, cok, and up he sterte,  
As man that was affraied in his herte.  
For naturelly a beest desireth flee  
Fro his contrarie, if he may it see,  
Though he never erst had seen it with his eye.

This Chaunteclere, when he gan him espie,  
He wold han fled, but that the fox anon  
Said ; gentil sire, alas ! what wol ye don ?  
Be ye affraid of me that am your frend ?  
Now certes, I were werse than any fend,  
If I to you wold harme or vilanie.  
I n'am not come your conseil to espie.  
But trewely the cause of my coming  
Was only for to herken how ye sing :  
For trewely ye han as mery a steven,  
As any angel hath, that is in heven ;  
Therwith ye han of musike more feling,  
Than had Boece, or any that can sing.  
My lord your fader (God his soule blesse)  
And eke your moder of hire gentillesse  
Han in myn hous yben, to my gret ese :  
And certes, sire, ful fain wold I you plesse.  
But for men speke of singing, I wol sey,  
So mote I brouken wel min eyen twey,  
Save you, ne herd I never man so sing,  
As did your fader in the morwening.  
Certes it was of herte all that he song.  
And for to make his vois the more strong,  
He wold so peine him, that with both his eyen  
He muste winke, so loud he wolde crien,  
And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,  
And stretchen forth his necke long and smal.

And eke he was of swiche discretion,  
That ther n'as no man in no region,  
That him in song or wisdom mighte passe.  
I have wel red in dan Burnel the asse  
Among his vers, how that ther was a cok,  
That, for a preestes sone yave him a knok  
Upon his leg, while he was yonge and nice,  
He made him for to lese his benefice.  
But certain ther is no comparison  
Betwix the wisdom and discretion  
Of youre fader, and his subtilitee.  
Now singeth, sire, for Seinte Charitee,  
Let see, can ye your fader contrefete?

This Chaunteclere his winges gan to bete,  
As man that coud not his treson espie,  
So was he ravished with his flaterie.

Alas! ye lordes, many a false flatour  
Is in your court, and many a losengeour,  
That pleseth you wel more, by my faith,  
Than he that sothfastnesse unto you saith.  
Redeth Ecclesiast of flaterie,  
Beth ware, ye lordes, of hire trecherie.

This Chaunteclere stood high upon his toos,  
Stretching his necke, and held his eyen cloos,  
And gan to crowen loude for the nones:  
And dan Russel the fox stert up at ones,  
And by the gargat hente Chaunteclere,  
And on his back toward the wood him bere.  
For yet ne was ther no man that him sued.

O destinee, that maist not ben eschued!  
Alas, that Chaunteclere flew fro the bemes!  
Alas, his wif ne raughte not of dremes!  
And on a Friday fell all this meschance.

O Venus, that art goddesse of plesance,  
Sin that thy servant was this Chaunteclere,  
And in thy service did all his powere,

More for delit, than world to multiplie,  
Why wolt thou suffre him on thy day to die?

O Gaufride, dere maister sovereign,  
That, whan thy worthy king Richard was slain  
With shot, complainedest his deth so sore,  
Why ne had I now thy science and thy lore,  
The Friday for to chiden, as did ye?  
(For on a Friday sothly slain was he)  
That wold I shew you how that I coud plaine,  
For Chauntecleres drede, and for his paine.

Certes swiche cry, ne lamentation  
N'as never of ladies made, whan Ilion  
Was wonne, and Pirrus with his streite swerd  
Whan he had hent king Priam by the berd,  
And slain him, (as saith us *Æneidos*)  
As maden all the hennes in the cloos,  
Whan they had seen of Chaunteclere the sight.  
But souverainly dame Pertelote shright,  
Ful louder than did Hasdruballes wif,  
Whan that hire husbond hadde ylost his lif,  
And that the Romaines hadden brent Cartage,  
She was so ful of turment and of rage,  
That wilfully into the fire she sterte,  
And brent hireselven with a stedfast herte.

O woful hennes, right so criden ye,  
As, whan that Nero brente the citee  
Of Rome, cried the senatoures wives,  
For that hir husbonds losten alle hir lives;  
Withouten gilt this Nero hath hem slain.

Now wol I turne unto my tale again.  
The sely widewe, and hire doughtren two,  
Herden thise hennes crie and maken wo,  
And out at the dores sterten they anon,  
And saw the fox toward the wode is gon,  
And bare upon his back the cok away:  
They crieden, out! harow and wala wa!

A ha the fox ! and after him they ran,  
 And eke with staves many another man ;  
 Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerlond,  
 And Malkin, with hire distaf in hire hond ;  
 Ran cow and calf, and eke the veray hogges  
 So fered were for berking of the dogges,  
 And shouting of the men and women eke,  
 They ronnen so, hem thought hir hertes breke.  
 They yelleden as fendes don in helle :  
 The dokes crieden as men wold hem quelle :  
 The gees for fere flewen over the trees,  
 Out of the hive came the swarme of bees,  
 So hidous was the noise, a *benedicite* !  
 Certes he Jakke Straw, and his meinie,  
 Ne maden never shoutes half so shrille,  
 Whan that they wolden any Fleming kille,  
 As thilke day was made upon the fox  
 Of bras they broughten beemes and of box,  
 Of horn and bone, in which they blew and  
 pouped,  
 And therwithal they shriked and they houped ;  
 I semed, as that the heven shulde falle.

Now, goode men, I pray you herkeneth alle ;  
 Lo, how fortune turneth sodenly  
 The hope and pride eke of hire enemy.  
 This cok that lay upon the foxes bake,  
 In all his drede, unto the fox he spake,  
 And sayde ; sire, if that I were as ye,  
 Yet wolde I sayn, (as wisly God helpe me)  
 Turneth agein, ye proude cherles alle ;  
 A veray pestilence upon you falle.  
 Now am I come unto the wodes side,  
 Maugre your hed, the cok shal here abide ;  
 I wol him ete in faith, and that anon.

The fox answered, in faith it shal be don :  
 And as he spake the word, al sodenly

The cok brake from his mouth deliverly,  
And high upon a tree he flew anon.

And whan the fox saw that the cok was gon,  
Alas ! quod he, o Chaunteclere, alas !  
I have (quod he) ydon to you trespas,  
In as moche as I maked you aferd,  
Whan I you hente, and brought out of your yerd ;  
But, sire, I did it in no wikke entente :  
Come down, and I shal tell you what I mente.  
I shal say sothe to you, God helpe me so.

Nay than, quod he, I shrewe us bothe two.  
And first I shrewe myself, bothe blood and bones,  
If thou begile me oftener than ones.  
Thou shalt no more thurgh thy flaterie  
Do me to sing and winken with myn eye.  
For he that winketh, whan he shulde see,  
Al wilfully, God let him never the.

Nay, quod the fox, but God yeve him meschance,  
That is so indiscrete of governance,  
That jangleth, whan that he shuld hold his pees.

Lo, which it is for to be reccheles  
And negligent, and trust on flaterie.  
But ye that holden this tale a folie  
As of a fox, or of a cok, or hen,  
Taketh the moralitee therof, good men.  
For Seint Poule sayth, That all that writen is,  
To our doctrine it is ywritten ywis.  
Taketh the fruit, and let the chaf be stille.

Now, goode God, if that it be thy wille,  
As sayth my Lord, so make us all good men ;  
And bring us to thy highe blisse. *Amen.*

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## THE SECOND NONNES TALE.

THE ministre and the norice unto vices,  
Which that men clepe in English idelnesse,  
That porter at the gate is of delices,  
To eschuen, and by hire contrary hire oppresse,  
That is to sain, by leful besinesse,  
Wel oughte we to don al our entente,  
Lest that the fend thurgh idelnesse us hente.

For he that with his thousand cordes slie  
Continuelly us waiteth to beclappe,  
Whan he may man in idelnesse espie,  
He can so lightly cacche him in his trappe,  
Til that a man be hent right by the lappe,  
He n'is not ware the fend hath him in hond :  
Wel ought us werche, and idlenesse withstond.

And though men dradden never for to die,  
Yet see men wel by reson douteles,  
That idelnesse is rote of slogardie,  
Of which ther never cometh no good encrees,  
And see that slouthe holdeth hem in a lees,  
Only to slepe, and for to ete and drinke,  
And to devouren all that other swinke.

And for to put us from swiche idelnesse,  
That cause is of so gret confusion,  
I have here don my feithful besinesse  
After the Legende in translation  
Right of thy glorious lif and passion,  
Thou with thy gerlond, wrought of rose and lilie,  
Thee mene I, maid and martir Seinte Cecilie.



And thou, that arte floure of virgines all,  
Of whom that Bernard list so wel to write,  
To thee at my beginning first I call,  
Thou comfort of us wretches, do me endite  
Thy maidens deth, that wan thurgh hire merite  
The eternal lif, and over the fend victorie,  
As man may after reden in hire storie.

Thou maide and mother, doughter of thy son,  
Thou well of mercy, sinful soules cure,  
In whom that God of bountee chees to won ;  
Thou humble and high over every creature,  
Thou nobledest so fer forth our nature,  
That no desdaine the maker had of kinde  
His son in blood and flesh to clothe and winde.

Within the cloystre blisful of thy sides,  
Toke mannes shape the eternal love and pees,  
That of the trine compas Lord and gide is,  
Whom erthe, and see, and heven out of relees  
Ay herien ; and thou, virgine wemmeles,  
Bare of thy body (and dweltest maiden pure)  
The creatour of every creature.

Assembled is in thee magnificence  
With mercy, goodnesse, and with swiche pitee,  
That thou, that art the sonne of excellence,  
Not only helpst hem that praien thee,  
But oftentime of thy benignitee  
Ful freely, or that men thin helpe beseche,  
Thou goest beforne, and art hir lives leche.

Now helpe, thou meke and blisful faire maide,  
Me flemed wretch, in this desert of galle ;  
Thinke on the woman Cananee, that saide  
That whelpes eten som of the cromes alle

That from hir Lordes table ben yfalle ;  
And though that I, unworthy sone of Eve,  
Be sinful, yet accepteth my beleve.

And for that feith is ded withouten werkes,  
So for to werken yeve me wit and space,  
That I be quit from thennes that most derke is ;  
O thou, that art so faire and ful of grace,  
Be thou min advocat in that high place,  
Ther as withouten ende is songe Osanne,  
Thou Cristes mother, doughter dere of Anne.

And of thy light my soule in prison light,  
That troubled is by the contagion  
Of my body, and also by the wight  
Of erthly lust, and false affection :  
O haven of refute, o salvation  
Of hem that ben in sorwe and in distresse,  
Now help, for to my werk I wol me dresse.

Yet pray I you that reden that I write,  
Foryeve me, that I do no diligence  
This ilke storie subtilly to endite.  
For both have I the wordes and sentence  
Of him, that at the seintes reverence  
The storie wrote, and folowed hire legende,  
And pray you that ye wol my werk amende.

First wol I you the name of Seinte Cecillie  
Expounne, as men may in hire storie see :  
It is to sayn in English, Hevens lilie,  
For pure chastnesse of virginitee,  
Or for she whithnesse had of honestee,  
And grene of consience, and of good fame  
The swote savour, Lilie was hire name.

Or Cecilie is to sayn the way to blinde,  
For she ensample was by good teching ;  
Or elles Cecilie, as I writen finde,  
Is joined by a maner conjoining  
Of heven and *Lia*, and here in figuring  
The heven is set for thought of holinesse,  
And *Lia*, for her lasting besnesse.

Cecilie may eke be sayd in this manere,  
Wanting of blindnesse, for hire grete light  
Of sapience, and for hire thewes clere.  
Or elles lo, this maidens name bright  
Of heven or *Leos* cometh, for which by right  
Men might hire wel the heven of peple calle,  
Ensamle of good and wise werkes alle :

For *Leos* peple in English is to say ;  
And right as men may in the heven see  
The sonne and mone, and sterres every way,  
Right so men gostly, in this maiden free  
Sawen of faith the magnanimittee,  
And eke the clerenesse hole of sapience,  
And sondry werkes, bright of excellence.

And right so as thise Philosophres write,  
That heven is swift and round, and eke brenning,  
Right so was faire Cecilie the white  
Ful swift and besy in every good werking,  
And round and hole in good persevering,  
And brenning ever in charitee ful bright :  
Now have I you declared what she hight.

This maiden bright Cecile, as hire lif saith,  
Was come of Romaines and of noble kind,  
And from hire cradle fostred in the faith  
Of Crist, and bare his Gospel in hire mind :

She never cesed, as I writen find,  
Of hire prayere, and God to love and drede,  
Beseching him to kepe hire maidenhede.

And whan this maiden shuld until a man  
Ywedded be, that was ful yonge of age,  
Which that ycleped was Valerian,  
And day was comen of hire marriage,  
She ful devout and humble in hire corage,  
Under hire robe of gold, that sat ful faire,  
Had next hire flesh yclad hire in an haire.

And while that the organs maken melodie,  
To God alone thus in hire hert song she ;  
O Lord, my soule and eke my body gie  
Unwemmed, lest that I confounded be.  
And for his love that died upon the tree,  
Every second or thridde day she fast,  
Ay bidding in hire orisons ful fast.

The night came, and to bedde must she gon  
With hire husbond, as it is the manere,  
And prively she said to him anon ;  
O swete and wel beloved spouse dere,  
Ther is a conseil, and ye wol it here,  
Which that right fayn I wold unto you saie,  
So that ye swere, ye wol it not bewraie.

Valerian gan fast unto hire swere,  
That for no cas, ne thing that mighte be,  
He shulde never to non bewraien here ;  
And than at erst thus to him saide she ;  
I have an Angel which that loveth me,  
That with gret love, wher so I wake or slepe,  
Is redy ay my body for to kepe ;

And if that he may felen out of drede,  
That ye me touch or love in vilanie,  
He right anon wol sleen you with the dede,  
And in your youthe thus ye shulden die.  
And if that ye in clene love me gie,  
He wol you love as me, for your clenenesse.  
And shew to you his joye and his brightnesse.

This Valerian, corrected as God wold,  
Answerd again, if I shal trusten thee,  
Let me that angel seen, and him behold ;  
And if that it a veray angel be,  
Than wol I don as thou hast prayed me ;  
And if thou love another man, forsothe  
Right with this swerd than wol I slee you bothe

Cecile answerd anon right in this wise ;  
If that you list, the angel shul ye see,  
So that ye trowe on Crist, and you baptise ;  
Goth forth to Via Apia (quod she)  
That fro this toun ne stant but miles three,  
And to the poure folkes that ther dwellen  
Say hem right thus, as that I shal you tellen.

Tell hem, that I Cecile you to hem sent  
To shewen you the good Urban the old,  
For secree nedes, and for good entent ;  
And whan that ye Seint Urban han behold,  
Tell him the wordes whiche I to you told ;  
And whan that he hath purged you fro sinne,  
Than shal ye seen that angel er ye twinne.

Valerian is to the place gon,  
And right as he was taught by hire lerning,  
He fond this holy old Urban anon  
Among the seintes buriels louting :

And he anon withouten taryng  
Did his message, and whan that he it tolde,  
Urban for joye his hondes gan upholde.

The teres from his eyen let he falle ;  
Almighty Lord, o Jesu Crist, quod he,  
Sower of chast conseil, hierde of us alle,  
The fruit of thilke seed of chastitee  
That thou hast sow in Cecile, take to thee :  
Lo, like a besy bee withouten gile  
Thee serveth ay thin owen thral Cecile.

For thilke spouse, that she toke but newe  
Ful like a fiers leon, she sendeth here  
As meke as ever was any lambe to ewe.  
And with that word anon ther gan apere  
An old man, clad in white clothes clere,  
That had a book with lettres of gold in hond,  
And gan beforen Valerian to stond.

Valerian, as ded, fell down for drede,  
Whan he him saw ; and he up hent him tho,  
And on his book right thus he gan to rede ;  
On Lord, on faith, on God withouten mo,  
On Cristendom, and fader of all also  
Aboven all, and over all every wher :  
Thise wordes all with gold ywriten were.

Whan this was red, than said this olde man,  
Levest thou this thing or no ? say ye or nay.  
I leve all this thing, quod Valerian,  
For sother thing than this, I dare wel say,  
Under the heven no wight thinken may.  
Tho vanished the olde man, he n'iste wher,  
And pope Urban him christened right ther.

Valerian goth home, and fint Cecilie  
Within his chambre with an angel stonde :  
This angel had of roses and of lilie  
Corones two, the which he bare in honde,  
And first to Cecile, as I understonde,  
He yaf that on, and after gan he take  
That other to Valerian hire make.

With body clene, and with unwemmed thought  
Kepeth ay wel thise corones two, quod he,  
From paradis to you I have hem brought,  
Ne never mo ne shul they roten be,  
Ne lese hir swete savour, trusteth me,  
Ne never wight shal seen hem with his eye,  
But he be chaste, and hate vilanie.

And thou, Valerian, for thou so sone  
Assentedest to good conseil, also  
Say what thee list, and thou shalt han thy bone.  
I have a brother, quod Valerian tho,  
That in this world I love no man so,  
I pray you that my brother may have grace  
To know the trouth, as I do in this place.

The angel sayd ; God liketh thy request,  
And bothe with the palme of martirdome  
Ye shullen come unto his blisful rest.  
And with that word, Tiburce his brother come.  
And whan that he the savour undernome,  
Which that the roses and the lilies cast,  
Within his herte he gan to wonder fast,

And said ; I wonder this time of the yere  
Whennes that swete savour cometh so  
Of roses and lilies, that I smelle here ;  
For though I had hem in min hondes two,

The savour might in me no deper go :  
The swete smel, that in min herte I find,  
Hath changed me all in another kind.

Valerian saide ; two corones han we  
Snow-white and rose-red, that shinen clere,  
Which that thin eyen han no might to see :  
And as thou smellest hem thurgh my praiere,  
So shalt thou seen hem, leve brother dere,  
If it so be thou wolt withouten slouthe  
Beleve aright, and know the veray trouthe.

Tiburce answered ; saiest thou this to me  
In sothnesse, or in dreme herken I this ?  
In dremes, quod Valerian, han we be  
Unto this time, brother min, ywis :  
But now at erst in trouthe our dwelling is.  
How wost thou this, quod Tiburce, in what wise ?  
Quod Valerian ; that shal I thee devise.

The angel of God hath me the trouth ytaught,  
Which thou shalt seen, if that thou wilt reney  
The idoles, and be clene, and elles naught.  
[And of the miracle of thise corones twey  
Seint Ambrose in his preface list to sey ;  
Solempnely this noble doctour dere  
Commendeth it, and saith in this manere.

The palme of martirdome for to receive,  
Seinte Cecilie, fulfilled of Goddes yeft,  
The world and eke hire chambre gan she weive ;  
Witnesse Tiburces and Ceciles shrift,  
To which God of his bountee wolde shift  
Corones two, of floures wel smelling,  
And made his angel hem the corones bring.



The maid hath brought this men to blisse above ;  
The world hath wist what it is worth certain  
Devotion of chastitee to love.]  
Tho shewed him Cecile all open and plain,  
That all idoles n'is but a thing in vain,  
For they ben dombe, and therto they ben deve,  
And charged him his idoles for to leve.

Who so that troweth not this, a best he is,  
Quod this Tiburce, if that I shal not lie.  
And she gan kisse his brest whan she herd this,  
And was ful glad he coude trouth espie :  
This day I take thee for min allie,  
Saide this blisful faire maiden dere ;  
And after that she said as ye may here.

Lo, right so as the love of Crist (quod she)  
Made me thy brothers wif, right in that wise  
Anon for mine allie here take I thee,  
Sithen that thou wolt thin idoles despise.  
Goth with thy brother now and thee baptise,  
And make thee clene, so that thou maist behold  
The angels face, of which thy brother told.

Tiburce answered, and saide ; brother dere,  
First tell me whither I shal, and to what man.  
To whom ? quod he ; come forth with good chere,  
I wol thee lede unto the pope Urban.  
To Urban ? brother min Valerian,  
Quod tho Tiburce, wilt thou me thider lede ?  
Me thinketh that it were a wonder dede.

Ne menest thou not Urban (quod he tho)  
That is so often damned to be ded,  
And woneth in halkes alway to and fro,  
And dare not ones putten forth his hed ?

Men shuld him brennen in a fire so red,  
If he were found, or that men might him spie,  
And we also, to bere him compaignie.

And while we seken thilke divinitee,  
That is yhid in heven prively,  
Algate ybrent in this world shuld we be.  
To whom Cecile answered boldely ;  
Men mighten dreden wel and skilfully  
This lif to lese, min owen dere brother,  
If this were living only and non other.

But ther is better lif in other place,  
That never shal be lost, ne drede thee nought :  
Which Goddes sone us tolde thurgh his grace,  
That fadres sone which alle thinges wrought ;  
And all that wrought is with a skilful thought,  
The gost, that from the fader gan procede,  
Hath souled hem withouten any drede.

By word and by miracle he Goddes sone,  
Whan he was in this world, declared here,  
That ther is other lif ther men may wone.  
To whom answerd Tiburce ; o suster dere,  
Ne saigest thou right now in this manere,  
Ther n'as but o God, lord in sothfastnesse,  
And now of three how mayst thou bere witnesse ?

That shall I tel, quod she, or that I go.  
Right as a man hath sapiences three,  
Memorie, engine, and intellect also,  
So in o being of divinitee  
Three persones mowen ther righte wel be.  
Tho gan she him ful besily to preche  
Of Cristes sonde, and of his peines teche,

And many pointes of his passion ;  
How Goddes sone in this world was withhold  
To don mankinde pleine remission,  
That was ybound in sinne and cares cold.  
All this thing she unto Tiburce told,  
And after this Tiburce in good entent,  
With Valerian to pope Urban he went,

That thanked God, and with glad herte and light  
He cristened him, and made him in that place  
Parfite in his lerning and Goddes knight.  
And after this Tiburce gat swiche grace,  
That every day he saw in time and space  
The angel of God, and every maner bone  
That he God axed, it was sped ful sone.

It were ful hard by ordre for to sain  
How many wonders Jesus for hem wrought.  
But at the last, to tellen short and plain,  
The sergeaunts of the toun of Rome hem sought,  
And hem before Almache the prefect brought,  
Which hem apposed, and knew all hire entent,  
And to the image of Jupiter hem sent ;

And said ; who so wol nought do sacrifice,  
Swap of his hed, this is my sentence here.  
Anon thise martyrs, that I you devise,  
On Maximus, that was an officere  
Of the prefectes, and his corniculere,  
Hem hent, and whan he forth the seintes lad,  
Himself he wept for pitee that he had.

Whan Maximus had herd the seintes lore,  
He gate him of the turmentoures leve,  
And lad hem to his hous withouten more ;  
And with hir preching, or that it were eve,

They gonnen fro the turmentours to reve,  
And fro Maxime, and fro his folk eche on  
The false faith, to trowe in God alone.

Cecilie came, whan it was waxen night,  
With preestes, that hem cristened all yfere ;  
And afterward, whan day was waxen light,  
Cecilie hem said with a ful stedfast chere ;  
Now, Cristes owen knightes leve and dere,  
Caste all away the werkes of derkenesse,  
And armeth you in armes of brightnesse.

Ye han forsoth ydon a gret bataille ;  
Your cours is don, your faith han ye conserved ;  
Goth to the croune of lif that may not faille ;  
The rightful juge which that ye han served,  
Shal yeve it you, as ye han it deserved.  
And whan this thing was said, as I devise,  
Men ledde hem forth to don the sacrifice.

But whan they weren to the place ybrought,  
To tellen shortly the conclusioun,  
They n'olde encense, ne sacrifice right nought,  
But on hir knees they setten hem adoun,  
With humble herte and sad devotioun,  
And losten bothe hir hedes in the place ;  
Hir soules wenten to the king of grace.

This Maximus, that saw this thing betide,  
With pitous teres told it anon right,  
That he hir soules saw to heaven glide  
With angels, ful of clerenesse and of light ;  
And with his word converted many a wight.  
For which Almachius did him to-bete  
With whip of led, til he his lif gan lete.

Cecile him toke, and buried him anon  
By Tiburce and Valerian softly,  
Within hir burying place, under the ston.  
And after this Almachius hastily  
Bad his ministres fetchen openly  
Cecile, so that she might in his presence  
Don sacrifice, and Jupiter encense.

But they converted at hire wise lore  
Wepten ful sore, and yaven ful credence  
Unto hire word, and crieden more and more ;  
Crist, Goddes sone, withouten difference  
Is veray God, this is all our sentence,  
That hath so good a servant him to serve :  
Thus with o vois we trowen though we sterve.

Almachius, that herd of this doing,  
Bad fetchen Cecile, that he might hire see :  
And alderfirst, lo, this was his axing ;  
What maner woman arte thou? quod he.  
I am a gentilwoman borne, quod she.  
I axe thee, quod he, though it thee greve,  
Of thy religion and of thy beleve.

Why than began your question folily,  
Quod she, that woldest two answers conclude  
In o demand? ye axen lewedly.  
Almache answerd to that similitude,  
Of whennes cometh thin answering so rude?  
Of whennes? (quod she, whan that she was freined)  
Of conscience, and of good faith unfeined.

Almachius said ; ne takest thou non hede  
Of my power? and she him answerd this ;  
Your might (quod she) ful litel is to drede ;  
For every mortal mannes power n'is

But like a bladder ful of wind ywis :  
For with a nedles point, whan it is blow,  
May all the bost of it be laid ful low.

Ful wrongfully begonnest thou, (quod he)  
And yet in wrong is al thy perseverance :  
Wost thou not how our mighty princes free  
Have thus commanded and made ordinance,  
That every cristen wight shal han penance  
But if that he his Cristendome withseye,  
And gon al quite, if he wol it reneye ?

Your princes erren, as your nobley doth,  
Quod tho Cecile, and with a wood sentence  
Ye make us gilty, and it is not soth :  
For ye that knowen wel our innocence,  
For as moch as we don ay reverence  
To Crist, and for we bere a Cristen name,  
Ye put on us a crime and eke a blame.

But we that knowen thilke name so  
For vertuous, we may it not withseye.  
Almache answered ; chese on of thise two,  
Do sacrifice, or Cristendom reneye,  
That thou mow now escapen by that wey.  
At which this holy blisful fayre maid  
Gan for to laughe, and to the juge said :

O juge confuse in thy nicetee,  
Woldest thou that I reneye innocence ?  
To maken me a wicked wight (quod she)  
Lo, he dissimuleth here in audience,  
He stareth and wodeth in his advertence.  
To whom Almachius said ; Unsely wretch,  
Ne wost thou not how far my might may stretch ?

Han not our mighty princes to me yeven  
Ya bothe power and eke auctoritee  
To maken folk to dien or to liven?  
Why spekest thou so proudly than to me?  
I ne speke nought but stedfastly. quod she,  
Not proudly, for I say, as for my side,  
We haten dedly thilke vice of pride.

And if thou drede not a soth for to here,  
Than wol I shewe al openly by right,  
That thou hast made a ful gret lesing here.  
Thou saist, thy princes han thee yeven might  
Both for to slee and for to quiken a wight,  
Thou that ne maist but only lif bereve,  
Thou hast non other power ne no leve.

But thou maist sayn, thy princes han thee maked  
Ministre of deth; for if thou speke of mo,  
Thou liest; for thy power is ful naked.  
Do way thy boldnesse, said Almachius tho,  
And sacrifice to our goddes, er thou go.  
I recke not what wrong that thou me proffre,  
For I can suffre it as a philosopre.

But thilke wronges may I not endure,  
That thou spekest of our goddes here, quod he.  
Cecile answerd; o nice creature,  
Thou saidest no word sin thou spake to me,  
That I ne knew therwith thy nicetee,  
And that thou were in every maner wise  
A lewed officer, a vain justice.

Ther lacketh nothing to thin utter eyen  
That thou n'art blind; for thing that we seen alle  
That is a ston, that men may wel espien,  
That ilke ston a god thou wolt it calle.

I rede thee let thin hond upon it falle,  
And tast it wel, and ston thou shalt it find,  
Sin that thou seest not with thin eyen blind.

It is a shame that the peple shal  
So scornen thee, and laugh at thy folie :  
For comunly men wot it wel over al,  
That mighty God is in his hevens hie ;  
And thise images, wel maist thou espie,  
To thee ne to hemself may not profite,  
For in effect they be not worth a mite.

Thise and swiche other wordes saide she,  
And he wex wroth, and bade men shuld hire lede  
Home til hire house, and in hire hous (quod he)  
Brenne hire right in a bath, with flames rede.  
And as he bade, right so was don the dede ;  
For in a bathe they gonne hire faste shetten,  
And night and day gret fire they under betten.

The longe night, and eke a day also,  
For all the fire, and eke the bathes hete,  
She sate al cold, and felt of it no wo,  
It made hire not a drope for to swete :  
But in that bath hire lif she muste lete.  
For he Almache, with a ful wicke entent,  
To sleen hire in the bath his sonde sent.

Three strokes in the nekke he smote hire tho  
The turmentour, but for no maner chance  
He mighte not smite all hire nekke atwo :  
And for ther was that time an ordinance  
That no man shulde don man swiche penance,  
The fourthe stroke to smiten, soft or sore,  
This turmentour ne dorste do not more ;



But half ded, with hire nekke ycorven ther  
He left hire lie, and on his way is went.  
The cristen folk, which that about hire were,  
With shetes han the blood ful faire yhent :  
Three dayes lived she in this turment,  
And never cesed hem the faith to teche,  
That she had fostred hem, she gan to preche,

And hem she yaf hire membles and hire thing,  
And to the pope Urban betoke hem tho,  
And said ; I axed this of heven king,  
To have respit three dayes and no mo,  
To recommend to you, or that I go,  
Thise soules lo, and that I might do werche  
Here of min hous perpetuellich a cherche.

Seint Urban, with his dekenes prively  
The body fette, and buried it by night  
Among his other seintes honestly :  
Hire hous the cherche of seinte Cecile hight  
Seint Urban halowed it, as he wel might,  
In which unto this day in noble wise  
Men don to Crist and to his seinte servise.

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### THE CHANONES YEMANNES PROLOGUE.

WHAN that tolde was the lif of seinte Cecile,  
Er we had ridden fully five mile,  
At Boughton under blee us gan atake  
A man, that clothed was in clothes blake,  
And undernethe he wered a white surplis.  
His hakeney, which that was al pomelee gris,

So swatte, that it wonder was to see,  
It semed as he had priked miles three.  
The horse eke that his yeman rode upon,  
So swatte, that unnethes might he gon.  
About the peytrel stood the some ful hie,  
He was of fome as flecked as a pie.  
A male tweifold on his croper lay,  
It semed that he caried litel array,  
Al light for sommer rode this worthy man.  
And in my herte wondren I began  
What that he was, til that I understode,  
How that his cloke was sowed to his hode ;  
For which whan I had long avised me,  
I demed him some chanon for to be.  
His hat heng at his back down by a las,  
For he had ridden more than trot or pas,  
He had ay priked like as he were wode.  
A clote-lefe he had laid under his hode  
For swete, and for to kepe his hed fro hete.  
But it was joye for to seen him swete ;  
His forehed dropped, as a stillatorie  
Were ful of plantaine or of paritorie.  
And whan that he was come, he gan to crie,  
God save (quod he) this joly compaignie.  
Fast have I priked (quod he) for your sake,  
Because that I wolde you atake,  
To riden in this mery compaignie.

His yeman was eke ful of curtesie,  
And saide ; Sires, now in the morwe tide  
Out of your hostelrie I saw you ride,  
And warned here my lord and soverain,  
Which that to riden with you is ful fain,  
For his disport ; he loveth daliance.  
Frend, for thy warning God yeve thee good chance,  
Than said our hoste ; certain it wolde seme  
Thy lord were wise, and so I may wel deme ;

He is ful joconde also dare I leye :  
Can he ought tell a mery tale or tweie,  
With which he gladen may this compaignie ?  
Who, sire ? my lord ? Ye, sire, withouten lie,  
He can of mirth and eke of jolitee  
Not but ynough ; also, sire, trusteth me,  
And ye him knew al so wel as do I,  
Ye wolden wondre how wel and craftily  
He coude werke, and that in sondry wise.  
He hath take on him many a gret emprise,  
Which were ful harde for any that is here  
To bring about, but they of him it lere.  
As homely as he rideth amonges you,  
If ye him knew, it wold be for your prow :  
Ye wolden not forgon his acquaintance  
For mochel good, I dare lay in balance  
All that I have in my possession.  
He is a man of high discession,  
I warne you wel, he is a passing man.  
Wel, quod our hoste, I pray thee tell me than,  
Is he a clerk, or non ? tell what he is.  
Nay, he is greter than a clerk ywis,  
Saide this yeman, and in wordes fewe,  
Hoste, of his craft somewhat I wol you shewe.  
I say, my lord can swiche a subtiltee,  
(But all his craft ye moun not wete of me,  
And somewhat help I yet to his werking)  
That all the ground on which we ben riding  
Till that we come to Canterbury toun,  
He coud al clene turnen up so down,  
And pave it all of silver and of gold.  
And whan this yeman had this tale ytolde  
Unto our hoste, he said ; *benedicite*,  
This thing is wonder mervailous to me,  
Sin that thy lord is of so high prudence,  
Because of which men shulde him reverence,

That of his worship rekketh he so lite ;  
His overest sloppe it is not worth a mite  
As in effect to him, so mote I go ;  
It is all bawdy and to-tore also.  
Why is thy lord so sluttish I thee preye,  
And is of power better cloth to beye,  
If that his dede accorded with thy speche ?  
Telle me that, and that I thee beseche.

Why ? quod this yeman, whereto axe ye me ?  
God helpe me so, for he shal never the :  
(But I wol not avowen that I say,  
And therefore kepe it secree I you pray)  
He is to wise in faith, as I beleve.  
Thing that is overdon, it wol not preve  
Aright, as clerkes sain, it is a vice ;  
Wherfore in that I hold him lewed and nice.  
For whan a man hath overgret a wit,  
Ful oft him happeth to misusen it :  
So doth my lord, and that me greveth sore.  
God it amende, I can say now no more.

Therof no force, good yeman, quod our host,  
Sin of the conning of thy lord thou wost,  
Telle how he doth, I pray thee hertily,  
Sin that he is so crafty and so sly.  
Wher dwellen ye, if it to tellen be ?

In the subarbes of a toun, quod he,  
Lurking in hernes and in lanes blinde,  
Wheras thise robbours and thise theves by kinde  
Holden hir privee fereful residence,  
As they that dare not shewen hir presence,  
So faren we, if I shal say the sothe.

Yet, quod our hoste, let me talken to the ;  
Why art thou so discoloured of thy face ?

Peter, quod he, God yeve it harde grace,  
I am so used the hote fire to blow,  
That it hath changed my colour I trow ;

I n'am not wont in no mirroure to prie,  
But swinke sore, and lerne to multiplie.  
We blundren ever, and poren in the fire,  
And for all that we faille of our desire,  
For ever we lacken our conclusion.  
To mochel folk we don illusion,  
And borwe gold, be it a pound or two,  
Or ten or twelve, or many sommes mo,  
And make hem wenen at the leste wey,  
That of a pound we connen maken twey,  
Yet is it false ; and ay we han good hope  
It for to don, and after it we grope :  
But that science is so fer us beforne,  
We mowen not, although we had it sworne,  
It overtake, it slit away so fast ;  
It wol us maken beggers at the last.

While this yeman was thus in his talking,  
This Chanon drow him nere, and herd all thing  
Which this yeman spake, for suspecion  
Of mennes speche ever had this Chanon :  
For Caton sayth, that he that gilty is,  
Demeth all thing be spoken of him ywis ;  
That was the cause, he gan so nigh him drawe  
To his yeman, to herken all his sawe,  
And thus he saide unto his yeman tho ;  
Hold thou thy pees, and speke no wordes mo :  
For if thou do, thou shalt it dere abie.  
Thou sclaunderest me here in this compaignie,  
And eke discoverest that thou shuldest hide.

Ye, quod our hoste, tell on, what so betide ;  
Of all his thretening recke not a mite.

In faith, quod he, no more I do but lite.  
And whan this Chanon saw it wold not be,  
But his yeman wold tell his privetee,  
He fled away for veray sorwe and shame.

A, quod the yeman, here shal rise a game :

All that I can anon I wol you telle,  
Sin he is gon ; the foule fend him quelle ;  
For never hereafter wol I with him mete  
For peny ne for pound, I you behete.  
He that me broughte first unto that game,  
Er that he die, sorwe have he and shame.  
For it is earnest to me by faith ;  
That fele I wel, what that any man saith ;  
And yet for all my smert, and all my grief,  
For all my sorwe, labour, and meschief,  
I coude never leve it in no wise.  
Now wolde God my wit mighte suffice  
To tellen all that longeth to that art ;  
But natheles, yet wol I tellen part ;  
Sin that my lord is gon, I wol not spare,  
Swiche thing as that I know, I wol declare.

**GOOD COUNSAIL OF CHAUCER.**

Fl.Y fro the prease, and dwell with soothfastnesse,  
 Suffise unto thy good though it be small,  
 For horde hath hate, and climbing tikelnesse,  
 Prease hath envy, and wele is blent over all,  
 Savour no more than thee behove shall,  
 Rede well thy selfe that other folke canst rede,  
 And trouth thee shall deliver, it is no drede.

Paine thee not ech crooked to redresse  
 In trust of her that tourneth as a ball,  
 Great rest standeth in little businesse,  
 Beware also to spurne againe a nall,  
 Strive not as doth a crocke with a wall,  
 Deme thy selfe that demest others dede,  
 And trouth thee shall deliver, it is no drede.

That thee is sent receive in buxomnesse,  
 The wrastling of this world asketh a fall,  
 Here is no home, here is but wildernesse,  
 Forth, pilgrime ! forth, beast, out of thy stall !  
 Looke up on high, and thanke God of all !  
 Weive thy lusts, and let thy ghost thee lede,  
 And trouth thee shall deliver, it is no drede.

**EXPLICIT.**

*L'ENVOY DE CHAUCER.**À SCOGAN.*

TOBROKEN been the statutes hie in Heaven,  
That create were eternally t'endure,  
Sithe that I see the bright goddes seven  
Mowe wepe and waile, and passion endure,  
As may in yearth a mortall creature :  
Alas, fro whens may this thing procede,  
Of which errour I die almost for drede ?

By word eterne, whilom, was it shape,  
That fro the fifth cercle, in no manere,  
Ne might of teares doune escape,  
But now so weepeth Venus in her sphere,  
That with her teares she wol drench us here.  
Alas, Scogan, this is for thine offence,  
Thou causest this deluge of pestilence.

Hast thou not said, in blasphemie of the goddis,  
Through pride, or through thy gret rekelnes,  
Such things as in the law of love forbode is,  
That for thy lady saw not thy distresse,  
Therefore thou yave her up at Mighelmesse ?  
Alas, Scogan, of olde folke ne yong,  
Was never erst Scogan blamed for his tong.

Thou drew in scorne Cupide eke to record,  
Of thilke rebell word that thou hast spoken,  
For which he woll no lenger be thy lord,  
And Scogan, though his bow be not broken,  
He woll not with his arowes be ywroken  
On thee ne me, ne none of our figure,  
We shall of him have neither hurte ne cure.



Now certes, frend, I drede of thine unhape,  
Lest for thy gilte the wreche of love procede  
On all hem that been hore and round of shape,  
That be so likely folke to spede,  
Than we shall of our labour have our mede,  
But well I wot, thou wolt answere and say,  
Lo, old Grisell list to renne and play.

Nay, Scogan, say not so, for I me excuse,  
God helpe me so, in no rime doubtles,  
Ne thinke I never of sleepe wake my muse,  
That rusteth in my sheath still in pees,  
While I was yong I put her forth in prees,  
But all shall passe that men prose or rime,  
Take every man his tourne as for his time.

Scogan, thou knelest at the stremes hedde  
Of grace, of all honour, and of worthiness,  
In th' ende of which I am dull as dedde,  
Forgotten in solitary wilderness,  
Yet, Scogan, thinke on Tullius' kindness,  
Mind thy frende there it may fructifie,  
Farewel, and looke thou never eft love defie.

EXPLICIT.

*L'ENVOY DE CHAUCER À BUKTON.*

My master Bukton, whan of Christ our king.  
Was asked, what is troth or sothfastnesse,  
He not a worde answerde to that asking,  
As who saith, no man is all true, I gesse :  
And therefore, though I hight to expresse  
The sorrow and wo that is in mariage,  
I dare not writen of it no wickednesse,  
Lest I my selfe fall este in suche dotage.

I woll not say how that it is the chaine  
Of Sathanas, on which he knaweth ever,  
But I dare saine, were he out of his paine,  
As by his will he would be bounden never ;  
But thilke doted foole, that eft hath lever  
Ychayned be, than out of prison crepe,  
God let him never fro his wo discover,  
Ne no man him bewayle, though he wepe.

But yet, lest thou doe worse, take a wife,  
Bet is to wedde than brenne in worse wise.  
But thou shalt have sorow on thy flesh thy life,  
And ben thy wives thrale, as sain these wise,  
And if that holy writ may not suffice,  
Experience shall thee teach, so may happe,  
Take the way lever to be taken in frise,  
Than este to fall of wedding in the trappe.

This little writte, proverbes or figures,  
I sende you, take keepe of it I rede,  
Unwise is he that can no wele endure,  
If thou be siker, put thee not in drede,

The Wife of Bathe I pray you that ye rede  
Of this matter that we have no honde,  
God graunt you your lyfe freely to lede  
In fredome, for foule is to be bonde.

EXPLICIT.

**A BAILLAD**

**MADE BY CHAUCER, TEACHING WHAT IS GENTILNESS,  
OR WHOM IS WORTHY TO BE CALLED GENTILL.**

THE first stocke father of gentilnes,  
What man desireth gentil for to bee,  
Must followe his trace, and all his wittes dres  
Vertue to love and vices for to flee,  
For unto vertue longeth dignitee,  
And not the revers falsly, dare I deme,  
All weare he miter, crowne, or diademe.

This first stocke was full of rightwisnes,  
Trewe of his worde, sober, pitous and free,  
Clene of his goste, and loved besinesse,  
Against the vice of slouth in honeste,  
And, but his heire love vertue as did he,  
He is not gentill, though he rich seme,  
All weare he miter, crowne, or diademe.

Viceste may well be heir to old richesse,  
But there may no man, as men may wel see,  
Bequethe his heire his vertues noblenesse,  
That is appropriated unto no degree,  
But to the first father in majestee,  
That maketh his heires them that him queme,  
All weare he miter, crowne, or diademe.

**EXPLICIT.**

**TO HIS EMPTY PURSE.**

To you, my purse, and to none other wight  
Complaine I, for ye be my lady dere,  
I am sorry now that ye be light,  
For, certes, ye now make me heavy chere,  
Me were as lese laid upon a bere,  
For which unto your mercy thus I crie,  
Be heavy againe, or els mote I die.

Now vouchsafe this day or it be night,  
That I of you the blissful sowne may here,  
Or see your colour like the Sunne bright,  
That of yelowness had never pere,  
Ye be my life, ye be my hertes stere,  
Queene of comfort and of good companie,  
Be heavy againe, or els mote I die.

Now purse, that art to me my lives light,  
And saviour, as downe in this world here,  
Out of this towne helpe me by your might,  
Sith that you woll not be my treasure,  
For I am shave as nere as any frere,  
But I pray unto your curtesie,  
Be heavy againe, or els mote I die.

**EXPLICIT.**

BALADE SENT TO K. RICHARD.

SOMETIME the world so stedfast was and stable,  
That mannes word was an obligatioun,  
And now it is so false and deceivable,  
That word and deed, as in conclusioun,  
Is nothing like, for tourned is up so doun  
All the world, through mede and fikelnesse,  
That all is lost for lacke of stedfastnesse.

What maketh the world to be so variable  
But lust, that men have in dissension ?  
For among us a man is hold unable,  
But if he can by some collusion  
Doe his neighbour wrong and oppression :  
What causeth this but wilfull wretchednesse  
That all is lost for lacke of stedfastnesse ?

Trouth is put downe, reason is hold fable,  
Virtue hath now no domination,  
Pity is exiled, no man is merciable,  
Through covetise is blente discretion,  
The world hath made a permutation,  
Fro right to wrong, fro trouth to fikelnesse,  
That all is lost for lacke of stedfastnesse.

L'ENVOYE.

Prince, desire to be honourable,  
Cherish thy folke, and hate extortion,  
Suffer nothing that may be reprovabie  
To thine estate, done in thy region,  
Shew forth the yerd of castigation,  
Drede God, do law, love trouth and worthinesse,  
And wed thy folke ayen to stedfastnesse.

EXPLICIT.

A BALLADE OF THE VILLAGE WITHOUT  
PAINTING.

PLAINTIFE TO FORTUNE.

THIS wretched worldes transmutation,  
As wele and wo, now poor, and now honour,  
Without order or due discretion,  
Governed is by Fortunes errour,  
But natheless, the lacke of her favour  
Ne may not doe me sing, though that I die,  
*J'ay tout perdu, mon temps et mon labour,*  
For finally Fortune I defie.

Yet is me left the sight of my reason,  
To know friend fro foe in thy mirrour,  
So much hath yet thy turning up and down  
Ytaught me to knowen in an hour,  
But truly, no force of thy reddour  
To him that over himselfe hath maistrie,  
My suffisaunce shall be my succour,  
For finally Fortune I defie.

O Socrates, thou stedfast champion,  
She might never be thy turmentour,  
Thou never dredest her oppression,  
Ne in her chere found thou no favour,  
Thou knew the deceit of her colour,  
And that her moste worship is for to lie,  
I know her eke a false dissimulour,  
For finally Fortune I defie.

THE ANSWERE OF FORTUNE.

No man is wretched, but himselfe it wene,  
Ne that hath in himselfe suffisaunce,

*A BALLADE OF THE VILLAGE.* 283

Why saist thou than I am to thee so kene,  
That hast thy selfe out of my governance?  
Say thus, graunt mercy of thine habundance  
That thou hast lent, or this, thou shalt not strive,  
What wost thou yet how I thee woll avance?  
And eke thou hast thy best friend alive.

I have thee taught de·vi·sion be·weene  
Friend of effect, and friend of countenance,  
Thee needeth nat the gall of an hine,  
That cureth eyen darke for her pennaunce,  
Now seest thou clere that were in ignoraunce,  
Yet holt thine anker, and yet thou maist arrive  
There bounty beareth the key of my substance,  
And eke thou hast thy best friend alive.

How many have I refused to sustene,  
Sith I have thee fostred in thy pleasaunce!  
Wolt thou than make a statute on thy quene,  
That I shall be aye at thine ordinaunce?  
Thou born art in my reigne of variaunce,  
About the whele with other must thou drive,  
My lore is bet than wicke is thy grevaunce,  
And eke thou hast thy best friend alive.

THE ANSWERE TO FORTUNE.

Thy lore I dampne, it is adversity,  
My frend maist thou not reve, blind goddessse,  
That I thy friends know, I thanke it thee,  
Take hem againe, let hem go lie a presse,  
The niggardes in keeping hir richesse,  
Pronostike is, thou wolt hir toure assaile,  
Wicke appetite commeth aye before sicknesse,  
In general this rule may not faile.



FORTUNE.

Thou pinchest at my mutability,  
 For I thee lent a droppe of my richesse,  
 And now me liketh to withdraw me,  
 Why shouldest thou my royalty oppresse ?  
 The sea may ebbe and flow more and lesse,  
 The welken hath might to shine, rain, and hail,  
 Right so must I kithe my brotilnesse,  
 In generall this rule may not fail.

THE PLAINTIFE.

Lo, the execution of the majesty,  
 That all purveigheth of his rightwisenesse,  
 That same thing Fortune clepen ye,  
 Ye blind beasts, full of leaudnesse,  
 The Heaven hath property of sikernesse,  
 This world hath ever restlesse travaile,  
 The last day is end of mine entresse,  
 In generall this rule may not faile.

TH'ENVOYE OF FORTUNE.

Princes, I pray you of your gentilnesse  
 Let not this man and me thus cry and plain,  
 And I shall quite you this businesse,  
 And if ye liste releve him of his pain,  
 Pray ye his best frende, of his noblesse,  
 That to some better state he may attain.

## GLOSSARY.

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**Abawed** ; astonished. **Achatours** ; purchasers. **Adnoutry** ; adultery. **Agilt** ; offended. **Agrise** ; grue. **Alderbest** ; best of all. **Ambes as** ; double ace in dice. **And** ; an, if. **Anelace** ; a dagger or wood-knife. **Appaire** ; impair. **Apert** ; open. **Appose** ; to question. **Arette** ; to impute. **Aspre** ; bitter. **Auter** ; altar. **Avising** ; looking at. **Aweved** ; dazed. **Awhaped** ; confounded, dazed.

**Becappe** ; ensnare. **Bespreint** ; sprinkled. **Bestad** ; situated. **Bet, Bete** ; better. **Bete** ; to prepare. **Bewreiest** ; betrayest. **Bitreut** ; entwine. **Blakes** ; letters. **Blende** ; deceive. **Bleve** ; to stay. **Blive** ; quickly. **Boult** ; sift. **Brede** ; abroad. **Breide** ; stray. **Bren** ; bran. **Bresten** ; burst. **Bronken** ; preserve. **Brotelnesse** ; fickleness.

**Caraine** ; carrion. **Chaffare** ; merchandise. **Chere** ; manner, bearing. **Clepe** ; clasp. **Clepen** ; call. **Coude** ; knew. **Counterpleted** ; pleaded against. **Countour** ; a counting-house, an accountant. **Courtepy** ; a short

cloak. Couthe ; knew, could. Covine ; cunning, contrivance. Culpons ; a bundle of anything, as a lock of hair or a fagot of wood.

Danger ; shyness. Daweth ; dawneth. Debonaire ; gracious. Dees ; dais. Deigneliche ; proudly. Deignous ; disdainful. Hath deintee ; desires. A dele ; an atom. Deliver ; nimble. Dey ; the lowest grade of country labourer. Domes ; judgments. Dormant ; sleeping, fixed. Out of drede ; without doubt. Drenching ; drowning. Dretche ; delay. Dretched ; troubled. Drie ; suffer.

Eche ; to eke, supplement. Eft ; after. Eggement ; incitement. Elenge ; strange. Ender ; goal. Enhaunsed ; raised. Entremete ; interfere. Envyned ; stored with wine. Eticke ; probably Aristotle's Ethics.

Facounde ; speech. Faine ; fond. Farsed ; stuffed. Fawe ; fain. Feere ; companion. Fele ; many. Felon ; cruel. Fendliche ; fiendish. Ferforth ; thereupon. Ferne ; before, last. Ferre ; further. Fers ; Persian word signifying chief-counsellor, and formerly applied to second piece in chess. Ferthing ; particle. Fet ; fetch. Fetise ; neat. Fine ; cease. Fleme ; to banish. Flemer ; one who banishes. Fleyng ; flying. Floyting ; playing flute. Fong ; take. Forthy ; therefore. Foyson ; abundance. Franklin ; one of the highest class of freeholders. Frete ; devoured.

Gargat ; neck. Gat-tothod ; lower teeth project beyond upper, like those of a goat, underjawed. Gaure ; gaze.

Gestes ; histories. Gie ; guide, keep. Girles ; young people. Gipciere ; a cassock. Glase, glöse ; deceive. Glede ; a burning coal or brand, sparks. Gnarre ; a hard knot in a tree. Gofisshe ; foolish. Goliardeis ; a buffoon. Gree ; satisfaction, resignation. Groin ; a sad expression. Gruffe ; heavily.

A goddeshalfe ; on God's behalf. Halke ; corner. Halt ; held. Halwes ; saints. Hem ; them. Hente ; seized. Herbergage ; lodging. Herbergeours ; providers of lodging, harbingers. Heried ; praised. Herne ; corner. Hete ; promise. Hierdes ; herds. Hir ; their. Hire ; her. Hold ; stronghold. Hove ; hood. Hoved her to abide ; waited about for her. Humble ; sly. Hunte ; hunter.

Ich ; I.

Kepe, Keepe ; care, attention. Kidde ; revealed. Kind ; nature, instinct. Kith ; to show. Kithe ; show. Knave ; boy.

Lefe ; dear, pleasure. Lemes ; flames. Lere ; learn. Lesing ; a lie. Leste ; list. Lete ; stop. Lewed ; simple, stupid. Liggen ; lie. Likerous ; sensual, fond of drink. Lined ; painted. Limitour ; a friar licensed to ask alms within a certain limit. Lith ; limb. Loos ; praise. Losengeour ; flatterer. Lotther ; more hateful. Lough ; laughed. Lout ; to bow, stoop. Lustyhead ; health. Lust ; pleasure, health.

Manciple ; a purchaser or contractor, a caterer. Mannish ; term of utmost reproach to a woman. Mate ; mad.

Maugre; in spite of. May; maid. Medled; mixed. Meinie; retinue. Met; dreamed. Mo; more. Mokel; size. Mormal; a sore. Mote; must. Moun; may. Mue; to change.

Nad; had not. N'as; was not. Ne; nor. Nempnen; name. Nice; foolish. No force; no matter. Nome; took. Nouth; now. N'ot; wot not.

O; one. Or; ere. Overest sloppe; overcoat. Ownded; wavy.

Pace; proceed. Patron; pattern. Parcell; detail. Pardoner; a seller of indulgences. Parfay; by my faith. Parnis; a church-porch. Payenes; pagans. Pencil; small pennant. Perrie; jewels. Peyfrel; breast-piece in harness. Pine; pain. Pilwebere; a pillow-case. Pistel; whisper. Plages; plagues. Pomelee gris; dapple-grey. Possed; tossed. Pouraille; poor people. Pricke; point. Prickasoure; a hard rider. Prive; privy, private. Purveiance; provision.

Queint; unknown, lost. Quite; requite.

Rakell; rash. Rape; haste, to carry off. Real; regal. Rede; counsel. Relike; token. Refroiden; to cool. Reneie; renounce. Rethor; orator. Reve; to take away. Reysed; made a raid. Rone; rained. Rouncie; a hackney. Route; make a sound. Rownded; whispered. Rucking; hiding.

Sad ; earnest, demure. Sausefleme ; pimped. See ; seat. Sely ; harmless, simple, silly. Shenda ; to ruin, destroy. Shright ; shrieked. Sike ; sigh. Sithe ; times. Sith, sithen ; since. Sitte ; to suit. Sis cink ; six and five. Solas ; solace. Sompnour ; an officer, now called an apparitor, employed to summon delinquents to appear in the ecclesiastical courts. Sonde ; message, will. Sote ; sweet. Snibben ; snub, reprove. Spill ; die, kill. Stede ; resting-place. Stepe ; projecting. Stereliche ; fiercely. Steven ; a voice. Stewe ; closet. Stint ; cease. Stound-meale ; every moment. Streight ; stretched. Sterve ; die. Sued ; followed. Suffrant ; submissive. Surguedrie ; arrogance. Swappe ; swoop. Swegh ; rushing. Sweven ; dream. Swinken ; labour. Swithe ; quickly.

Tabard ; a short, sleeveless jacket, sometimes embroidered with heraldic bearings. Tabouren ; to drum. Tewel ; funnel. That ; what. The ; thrive. Ther ; where. Thirled ; pierced. Tho ; then. Throw ; moment. Tiden ; happen. Tidife ; titmouse (Skinner) or hedge-sparrow (Skeat). Toune ; tun, tap. Totoler ; whisperer. Triacle ; remedy. Travers ; curtains. Tretis ; long and shapely. Twinne ; to part.

Uncouth ; uncommon. Undernome ; received. Unnethes ; scarcely.

Vary ; err. Vavasour ; next in rank to a baron. Vernicle ; dimin. of Veronike, a copy in miniature of the miraculous picture of Christ. Verre ; glass.

Wastel-brede ; finest bread. Weived ; departed. Wemme ; a stain. Wenden ; intended. Werne ; to refuse. Werre ;

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